



The Historic Trust
Addendum: Mitigation for Providence Academy Site
Laundry and Boiler Buildings Removal

The Laundry and Boiler buildings at the Providence Academy site are slated for removal due to safety concerns and the lack of economically viable rehabilitation options. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1978, both buildings are landmarks ancillary to Providence Academy, for which construction began in 1873 and was originally known as the House of Providence.

As part of its ongoing stewardship of the Academy, The Historic Trust will continue its work to more thoroughly document the history and architecture of the Academy, its ancillary buildings, and related locales. Specific steps noted in previous communications to mitigate the removal of the c. 1888 Laundry Building and 1910 Boiler Building include incorporating information about them in tours and interpretive exhibits, and retaining and potentially re-using samples of their building materials. Though the Boiler Building post-dates the life of Mother Joseph who passed away in 1902, the significance of these utilitarian buildings is derived from associations with the groundbreaking, widely influential, and long-lasting work in social services, medicine, and education instituted by the Sisters of Providence, initially led by Mother Joseph of the Sacred Heart, and carried out for many decades at the site.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, in-person research is not currently possible at many information repositories. These include the Providence Archives in Seattle where many relevant documents are housed, and the Vancouver Community Library where local newspapers are available on microfilm. The Trust therefore cannot predict when it will be possible to pursue further in person research. On-line research will continue.

The Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation has reviewed the removal undertaking and provided additional notes and recommendations in a May 21, 2020 letter to the City of Vancouver. The Historic Trust appreciates this review and has addressed these items below.

Archaeology:

Neither The Historic Trust nor Marathon Acquisition and Development Inc., the firm currently involved in development plans for the west and north portions of the site, have an archaeologist on staff. Therefore, both entities will engage a qualified firm, such as Archaeological Investigations Northwest, to work with the City of Vancouver and Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation on requirements for archaeological documentation and permitting, including the well house remnants. AINW is already very familiar with the Academy site and associated downtown area through previous consulting projects.

Updated National Register of Historic Places Nomination

The Historic Trust will work with DAHP on preparing an updated nomination for the Academy to National Register of Historic Places following the removal of the Laundry and Boiler buildings.

The nomination will include information about previous buildings on site, including the laundry and boiler. The Trust will continue to be in contact with Providence Archives regarding any additional findings on the two buildings, and seek information from other logical sources. This document will provide another and publically-accessible way to frame research findings.

HABS/HAER Documentation

The historical research portion of this documentation would duplicate that of a National Register nomination. Due to unsafe building conditions of long-standing, The Historic Trust cannot allow architects access to the Laundry and Boiler buildings for preparation of the measured drawings associated with HABS/HAER documentation nor a photographer. Existing floor plans and interior photographs can be included with the National Register nomination. Contemporary exterior photographs will be taken and included with the National Register nomination.

VCCV Sub-area Plan

While this falls under the purview of the City of Vancouver, The Historic Trust has already offered participation of its staff in the coming updates to the City of Vancouver downtown plan.

Social Media Postings

In addition to the social media and website postings already available for the public on the history, architecture, and rehabilitation of the Academy, The Historic Trust will prepare a series of two podcasts addressing these topics. These will broaden the available information in an era where in-person tours of the building are not possible, and in a form not previously done on this topic by the Trust.

These mitigation measures, in concert with those already proposed, will result in a more complete story being told about the Academy site, and other local properties formerly owned by the Sisters of Providence. Though it is not possible to rehabilitate and reuse the Laundry and Boiler buildings, The Historic Trust is committed to preserving the historical record of the site as well as advancing its rehabilitation of Providence Academy.