Christ Church Steeple
Philadelphia, PA

VERTICAL access

Photos by Vertical Access

Project overview

Vertical Access was retained by John Milner Architects to perform a hands-on investigation of the exterior and to document existing conditions to assist the project team with preparation of repair recommendations. The assessment informed development of the restoration and preservation plan for the treatment of the exterior wood, cedar shakes, sheet metal flashings, lead-coated copper, and cast cementitious ornament.

Steeple description

The tower and steeple of Christ Church dates to 1754, constructed ten years after the rest of the church was completed. The steeple sits on a square-plan brick tower at the front of the west façade of the church. The base of the steeple, octagonal in plan, has circular windows facing the four cardinal directions, each framed by a pediment supported by consoles with carved human faces. Above the steeple base is the octagonal cupola, with round arch openings at each of the eight facets. Rising from the dome roof of the cupola is the slender spire, which is surmounted by a gilded weathervane. Most of the steeple exterior is clad in wood shingles, with wood trim and ornament. Sheet copper is used for flashings as well as ornamental panels and cladding. The standing seam cornice roof at the top of the masonry tower and deck at the interior of the cupola are lead-coated copper. Four large cast cementitious urns decorate the corners of the top of the brick tower.

Scope of work

- Performed a hands-on survey of the exterior materials on all sides of the steeple.

- Probed exterior materials with hand tools including awls and hammer-sounding.

- Documented representative and notable conditions observed on the exterior by means of still photographs hyperlinked to annotated AutoCAD drawings, with quantities provided for each condition.

Building owner

Christ Church Philadelphia

In collaboration with

- Christ Church Preservation Trust
- John Milner Architects, Inc.
- Keast and Hood Company