



Contact:

Maureen Mahoney Hill

Email: mmahoneycfre@gmail.com

Cell: (412) 780-4708

Preservation of 250 Year Old Timbers Begins
Fort Pitt Block House Closing During Work

Point State Park, Pittsburgh, PA – June 20, 2013 - X-rays taken in January of the two tiers of gun loop timbers encircling the Fort Pitt Block House revealed less internal deterioration than originally anticipated - good news for the nearly 250 year old structure.

The [Fort Pitt Block House](#), the oldest authenticated structure in Pittsburgh and a National Historic Landmark is all that remains of Fort Pitt, the largest and most elaborate British fort in North America. Donated to the Fort Pitt Society of the [Daughters of the American Revolution](#) of Allegheny County in 1894, the Block House has remained free and open to visitors from across the nation and around the world for over a century.

Much of the architectural fabric of the two story structure is intact in that the stone foundation, bricks and timber elements are largely original to its 1764 construction. Both floors have a course of wooden gun loopholes going around the building, providing a 360 degree view for the soldiers who were stationed in the Block House to keep watch over the fort. The soldiers in the Block House and the other redoubts around the fort provided a first line of defense; they could fire their muskets through the gun loops at anyone trying to attack.

As the Block House approaches its 250th anniversary in 2014, the Fort Pitt Society initiated a restoration and preservation project in early 2013. The first priority is to insure the stability of the gun loop timbers, the most fragile element of the structure. In January [TUV Rheinland Industrial Solutions, Inc.](#), a full-service inspection, testing and certification company, performed radiographic inspection on the timbers to assure that the preservation project is managed conscientiously to preserve the maximum amount of the original timbers.

“The x-ray exam showed that the gun loops did not have any significant internal wood deterioration and did not require complicated internal structural repairs,” said Dirk Taylor, of [Taylor Structural Engineers, Inc.](#), the structural engineer overseeing the Block House restoration project. “Rather, wood deterioration worked its way from the exterior surfaces inward, requiring only relatively simple repairs applied to the surface.” The main issue that remains is how to delicately work the necessary structural repairs into the wood without harming the appearance of the gun loops.



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[Allegheny Restoration](#) was selected to handle that specialized aspect of the work. Structural epoxy will be injected into any voids that have formed in the gun loops to restore their structural integrity. The few areas identified as severely deteriorated will be replaced and a small steel brace installed in one section of the lower gun loop. A wood preservative will be applied to all timber surfaces to prevent further deterioration and joint sealant will be used on the exterior timber joints. While on site, Allegheny Restoration will also repair and clean the wood shingle roof of the Block House before applying it with preservative as well.

Starting this week, the Block House will be closed from Tuesdays through Fridays so that the technicians from Allegheny Restoration can complete the preservation of the timbers. The materials used in the process are temperature sensitive, requiring the Block House to be closed to visitors for at least a month at the busiest time of the year.

“We hate to turn away visitors at the Block House, but this preservation and restoration work is critical to our ability to preserve and protect the structure so that future generations can know and appreciate the important role our region played in early American history,” said Emily Weaver, Curator at the Fort Pitt Block House. “We hope to be open on Saturdays as much as possible during the project and will welcome visitors during the Regatta and Fourth of July celebrations.”

For up to date information on the preservation project and closings at the Block House, check the Block House website at www.fortpittblockhouse.com or [Facebook page](#).

About The Fort Pitt Block House

The Fort Pitt Society is a supporting organization of the Pittsburgh Chapter of the National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution. The Fort Pitt Society owns, operates and maintains the Fort Pitt Block House and the surrounding grounds as a historical site and museum, and promotes preservation, education, and public awareness of Pittsburgh's role in early American history. Located in Point State Park, the Fort Pitt Block House is free and open to the public. For updated hours of operation, visit www.fortpittblockhouse.com.

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For more information about the Fort Pitt Block House, the preservation project, the 250th anniversary or to schedule an interview with a representative of the Block House or contractors involved with the preservation work, **please contact, Maureen Mahoney Hill at 412-780-4708** or by email at mmahoneycfre@gmail.com.