

African Meeting House 8 Smith Court, Boston, MA

Historic Masonry Restoration

Owner: Museum of Afro American History

Design: Stull & Lee, Inc., Boston, MA (in conjunction with National Park Service)

Timeline: April 2000 -- June 2000

Cost: \$150,000

The African Meeting House is a National Historic Landmark located in Boston's Beacon Hill neighborhood that was once the heart of Boston's 19th Century African-American community. Built in 1806, the African Meeting House is the oldest known existing black church in the United States, and was a place of discussion for many of the nation's most prominent abolitionists, such as Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, and Charles Sumner. The building was part of Boston's Underground Railroad Stations that sheltered many fugitive black slaves prior to the Civil War. Owned and operated by the Museum of Afro American History, the African Meeting House is now a part of the National Park Service. The facade of the building is an adaptation of a townhouse design by Boston architect Asher Benjamin.



The building underwent a major exterior restoration in 2000, and is currently undergoing an interior restoration with plans to reopen as a community meeting center in the near future.

As an integral part of the exterior restoration, Abbot was contracted to perform masonry repairs including repointing of joints, infilling of brick voids, and replacement of spalled brick on three sides of the building. Significantly, under the direction of the National Park Service, Abbot was able to salvage matching brick from a building demolition in the Beacon Hill area to maintain the historical integrity of the structure. Abbot also formulated special mortar compounds to match the color and composition as required by the National Park Service to meet historical guidelines. To further weatherproof the building exterior, Abbot replaced all of the existing copper gutters and downspouts with new lead-coated copper.