

Rehabilitation from an Intern's Perspective

by Andrea Kirchhoff



Left, the outbuilding behind 1120 Rhode Island before rehabilitation; below, after rehabilitation.

When the 1120 Rhode Island Accessory Structure was proposed for demolition, staff approval was reluctantly recommended because of economic hardship. The main structure at 1120 Rhode Island had already been rehabilitated and the funds were mostly depleted. Sadly, it looked like this contributing structure to the North Rhode Island Historic District was going to be demolished.

Although I usually stay fairly quiet during commission meetings, I hesitantly spoke up. All eyes were on me as I proposed recruiting student volunteers from the Architecture School at the University of Kansas, like myself, to offset the cost. The commission deferred the project upon this statement to allow me time to find volunteers.

With just a couple of phone calls and emails, I found my volunteers: Lane Brown, L. D. Williams, Adam Herberg, and Andy Putnam; all KU architecture students, save Williams. Mike Goans, a renovation and repair specialist highly interested in preservation, stepped up to be the coordinator of the project. With volunteers in place, I applied for the state tax credit and it was time to begin the rehabilitation process of the accessory structure, or so I thought.

Tenants to Homeowners, the property owner, was worried that if we got partially through the process and realized rehabilitation was not feasible, they would have spent their funds without achieving a new accessory structure. We reassured them that the main cost of the rehabilitation was the new concrete foundation. If the existing concrete was taken out and there was no way to replace it, demolition would therefore already be under way, thus ending the rehabilitation.

Luckily, the new concrete foundation (as well as the roof and siding) went in beautifully, thanks to Billy Construction. Week after week, we volunteered our time working on the structure. First we cleaned then hauled out the broken concrete before the new concrete could be poured. We then got a crash course on demolition. We picked up hammers and crowbars and carefully peeled away the newer addition as the siding was reused in the main part of the structure. The hole where the addition had been was framed and the walls were straightened. The roof was repaired, the windows put in, and the doors were reused. The finishing touch was the painting. With the expertise of Mike Goans, Billy Construction, and Dennis Brown Painting, the previously dilapidated structure looked new again.

The architecture students want to specially thank Mike Goans, as we have all agreed that this project taught us more about architecture and construction than any classroom or book ever could. This hands-on rehabilitation experience was one of a kind. We students gained knowledge that we can bring to our future designs. The neighborhood residents watched in amazement as the rehabilitation process played out and the contributing structure was saved.

