

Bainbridge House restoration and renovation to begin

Princeton University will begin the restoration and renovation of Bainbridge House, one of Princeton's oldest surviving buildings.

Built in 1766 on Nassau Street, it was the birthplace of William Bainbridge, a hero of the War of 1812. In 1783 it provided accommodations for the Continental Congress and in the 19th century it served as a boarding house for university students. For more than 50 years, Bainbridge House was home to the Princeton Public Library.

While the University has owned the building since 1877, it is currently occupied by the Historical Society of Princeton, which is relocating its headquarters to the Updike Farmstead property on Quaker Road in Princeton.

After the renovation, Bainbridge House will be used to inform visitors about arts and humanities offerings, including those at the Princeton University Art Museum and the Lewis Center for the Arts, and encourage further participation by the wider Princeton community and visitors in the University's programs.

The ground floor will include galleries, gathering spaces, a showcase for local artisans and a ticketing center. The focus of the project will be to provide a location that is both open and welcoming to the community and visitors to the region, and encourage all to discover the rich cultural opportunities available in Princeton.

The project will also include new administrative space for the education staff of the Princeton University Art Museum, who will staff the public spaces.

"We are delighted to have the opportunity to use this iconic building on Nassau Street to continue to bring creative programs from campus to town. As a new gateway to the arts and humanities, the building will have spaces in which the public will have opportunities to participate in full and varied programs, whether it is a lecture and discussion, a performance, an exhibition or a children's program," said Kristin Appelget, Princeton University's director of community and regional affairs.

The University recently engaged Murphy Burnham & Buttrick Architects of New York City to help develop a plan to preserve and restore the building's historic features while updating it for new uses and making it more accessible.

Planning for the restoration and renovation work is underway. It is expected that construction will begin in 2016, and the building will be ready for occupancy in fall 2017.