

CUSTOM HOUSE

Boston Landmark Commission Presentation

23 July 2019

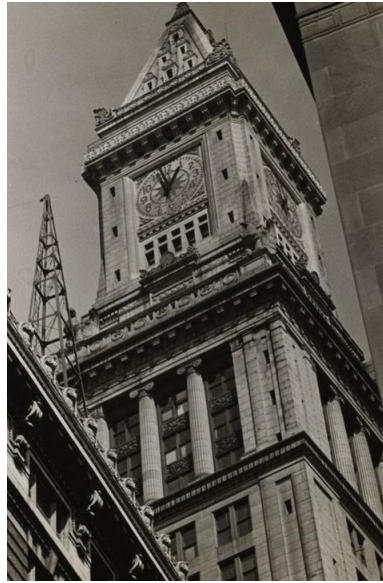


SIMPSON GUMPERTZ & HEGER 

Engineering of Structures
and Building Enclosures



c. 1915¹



c.1935-1955⁵



1953⁷



1976⁶

1910 1920 1930 1940 1950 1960 1970 1980 1990

● **1916**
Custom House clock complete⁸



c. 1916²

● **1932**
Tower repaired⁸



c. 1917-1934³

● **1941**
Clock hands painted black⁸



c.1940⁴

● **1945**
Tower repaired⁸

● **1953 - 1976**
Clock face changed

● **1987**
Hour clock hands repaired and gold leafed. Minute clock hands replaced with fiberglass epoxy and gold leafed.⁹

Resources

- 1. Unknown, Custom House Tower, Boston, Massachusetts, c. 1915. Boston Public Library
- 2. Unknown, c. 1916. Boston Globe Archive
- 3. Jones, Leslie, Custom House Tower, c. 1917-1934, Leslie Jones Collection
- 4. Jones, Leslie, Working on Custom House Tower Clock, c. 1940, Leslie Jones Collection
- 5. Griffin, Arthur, Custom House 1, c.1935-1955, Griffin Museum of Photography
- 6. Grant, Spencer, Harbor Towers and Custom House, Boston, 1976, Spencer Grant Collection
- 7. Holbrook, Harry, Boston's Market District Seen on a Busy Day, 1953, Boston Globe Archive
- 8. Floyd, Margaret Henderson, 1988, *The Custom House and Tower: Boston, Volume 1: Architectural History*, The Beal Companies
- 9. Donnellan, Astrid, 1990, Boston's Custom House Tower Clock, A Landmark Restored, *The Decorator*, The Historic Society of Early American Decoration, <https://www.clockdialsltd.com/boston-s-custom-house-tower-clock-a-landmark-restored.html>

Original



Current



Current Construction

- Clock Face
 - Gray/black background with glass/acrylic numerals and green star with white background at center.
- Clock Hands
 - Minute Hands – Fiberglass composite replacement hand with gold leaf
 - Hour Hands – Wood with gold leaf (likely original)

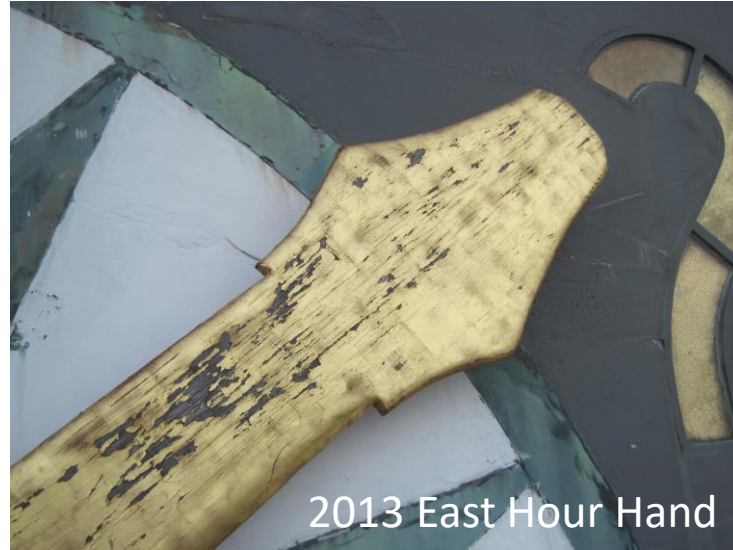


Clock Hands Condition

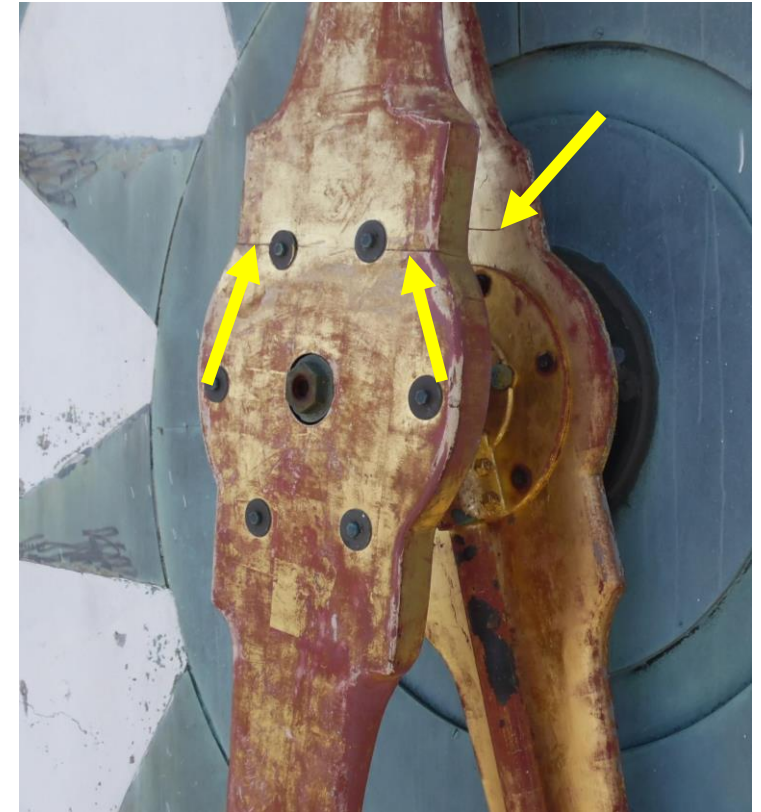
Deteriorated gold leaf finish



Checks/rot in wood hour hands



Cracks in hands at attachment
(both wood and fiberglass)



- Both original and replacement hands operate poorly due to weight of hands.
- Fiberglass is water logged due to cracks.

Proposed Clock Hand Scope of Work

- Replace all hands on all elevations (8 hands total)
 - Epoxy carbon fiber composite clock hands
 - Lighter material clock hands will improve clock function and durability
 - Integral color to improve appearance
- Retain 4 original hands and display within building
- Maintain existing clock face

Recommendation on Appearance



- Keep current clock face appearance
 - Scope of changes previously made unknown
 - Potential for damage to existing clockface materials if revert to original appearance
 - Original color unknown – just know lighter
- Match the clock hands to current color

Black Color Sample



Gold Color Sample

