



## Stripping for health

*PROSOCO and the Old Health Building*



Courtesy George Arnold, Tech Sales Associates

Covered with one coat of paint after another since 1927, Raleigh, N.C.'s Old Health Building, built in 1898, finally gets to show off its beautiful masonry following a 2006-2007 paint removal and exterior restoration.

Sixteen thousand square feet of beautiful 19th century red brick, with a subtle x-shaped, cross-hatching pattern of darker brick in the east gable—and they covered it in paint.

The "Old Health Building," Raleigh, N.C., designed by noted southern architect Frank P. Milburn and built in 1898, is a massive Chateausque brick structure, gabled and parapeted with plenty of rough-cut stone trim and arched-brick motif.

Why they painted it a limestone-color in the 1920s isn't known, says Charles Nickelson, architect and principal of Roughton Nickelson Deluca Architects, Pa., Durham. "They may have been trying to mimic limestone," he said.

Mr. Nickelson was the project architect for the 2006-2007 exterior restoration of the Old Health Building—which didn't always bear that name.

"It was originally built as a dormitory for the North Carolina School for the Deaf and Blind," Mr. Nickelson explained.

The students moved to a new school in 1923. The State Board of Health took up residence on the school campus from 1928-1953.

The State Board of Health got a new building in 1953, and the main campus of the school was demolished, leaving only the dormitory and the name "Old Health Building."

In the meantime, Mr. Nickelson said, the Old Health Building had been painted again—mustard yellow.

A 1980s pressure-washing attempt to remove the coating and reveal the beautiful red brick damaged the walls, so the

building was painted again, Mr. Nickelson said. Red.

That's how it stayed until the building was scaffolded in early 2006 as part of a project to replace and repair many of the building's 400 windows.

It was clear from the close-up view on the scaffolds much of the brick exterior was in bad shape. Brick faces were gone and mortar joints were eroded—in some cases nothing but sand, Mr. Nickelson said.

State authorities readily agreed to upgrade to an exterior restoration that began with removing the red paint.

"We tested about a dozen products before choosing PROSOCO's Enviro Klean® Safety Peel 2," Mr. Nickelson said.

Safety Peel 2, provided by Guaranteed Supply Company, Raleigh, N.C., got the nod because of its environmental soundness, in addition to its effectiveness at removing paint.

"Environmental soundness was an important consideration," Mr. Nickelson said, "especially as we were cleaning in the middle of downtown."

Originally designed for lead-paint abatement, Safety Peel 2 is a paste paint remover which contains no harsh solvents like the methanol or methylene chloride found in many coating removers.

Its paste consistency reduces chances for spills, splash, run down and wind drift, making it a good choice for urban applications.

Technicians from East Coast Restoration and Waterproofing, Concord, N.C., spray-applied Safety Peel 2

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about 1/8th to 1/4th of an inch thick onto the Old Health Building starting in January, said Jim Sherrife, company president.

Then they covered the coating with Enviro Klean<sup>®</sup> OverCoat<sup>®</sup>, a temporary protective paper film. OverCoat<sup>®</sup> insulates the paste paint remover from weather and protects it from passersby during extended dwell periods.

In this case, Safety Peel 2 stayed on the walls between 12 and 20 hours, slowly debonding the red paint.

Once Mr. Sherrife's crew saw the red paint had lost its grip on the old brick, they peeled the paper off the paint stripper and hot-water washed the paste and the dissolved and debonded paint off the walls.

Plastic sheeting on the scaffold protected nearby areas from wind-drift, while sandbags and a filter-fence caught the rundown from the cleaning, Mr. Sherrife said.

Starting with the building's north elevation, the crew cleaned about 1,000 square feet at a time, finishing in May on the west side.

"The brick was porous and grooved, not smooth at all, and the paint had penetrated so deeply in a few areas that we had to go back a second time," Mr. Sherrife said.

With the paint gone, East Coast Restoration and Waterproofing masons turned to repairing the century-old brick. Though some bricks were loose, and others were minus faces, the walls were in surprisingly good condition, Mr. Sherrife said.

The masons had to replace less than one percent of the bricks—about a thousand, although 100 percent tuck-pointing was required.

In addition, the Century Slate Company, Durham, N.C., repaired the slate roof and the cornices, gutters, ridge caps and finials.

When done, the team had literally turned back the hands of time for the old structure.

"It's a different, different building now than what we started with," Mr. Sherrife said.

The building's occupants, 35 employees of the North Carolina Department of Agriculture, Plant Industry Division are particularly pleased with their workplace's new "old" look, said Gene Cross, the division director.

"Actually, we had some apprehension about how well they would be able to clean the bricks," Mr. Cross said. "Our commissioner of agriculture, Steve Troxler, for one, told us he had his doubts. But when the wrap came off, he admitted he was wrong.

"They did a great job," Mr. Cross said. "Everyone is very pleased with how the building looks."



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Cornerstones mark the date construction began on the North Carolina School for the Blind and Deaf (1845), the date the dormitory construction began (1898) and the date the State Board of Health moved in (1928).