

EASTERN STATE PENITENTIARY

Visitor Center Phase One Construction Updates

November 2019

Our team of contractors demolished the stairs leading out of the admissions area. They also prepared the site for underground infrastructure updates by demolishing existing paving and excavating underlying soil.

Meanwhile, we took this rare opportunity to study newly uncovered parts of the building and documented the foundations of the south perimeter wall.



December 2019

During demolition, crews exposed cobblestones that would have once been part of an historic cartway, providing access for vehicles to enter the penitentiary. This portion of the cartway was likely constructed after Cellblocks 8 and 9 were built in the 1880s. The cobblestones were salvaged for future use.

Contractors also started reconstructing the stairs leading out of admissions and poured the foundations for our new tour launch point.

January 2020

Excavation in the front of the penitentiary continues as contractors lay conduit to provide electricity for our future visitor center. We also furthered our study of Eastern State's perimeter wall.

We learned that the foundation of the wall is much deeper in some places than we originally thought. Challenging our long-held belief that the wall extended ten feet below ground, contractors dug over 20 feet down in one spot and still had not reached the bottom.



February 2020

The Bertillon, which used to serve as Eastern State's prisoner intake area, is getting some upgrades. In addition to rebuilding the stairs, replacing the planter beds, and constructing a new ramp for ADA accessibility, the two steel entry doors to the Bertillon are being restored.

Conservators from Materials Conservation brought the 400-pound doors to their workshop, removed the rusted portions, and are now working too carefully integrate new steel and restore the doors to their original profile.



March 2020

With the help of several generous grants, we laid the groundwork for future amenities at Eastern State and, at the same time, invested in making our neighborhood a little bit greener. Contractors built new "subsurface infiltration basins" to integrate green stormwater practices into our site infrastructure.

The basins, buried feet below concrete paving, will collect and store stormwater in perforated pipes and a bed of gravel before allowing the water to slowly seep into the ground. This system will reduce flooding, naturally filter pollutants from the water, and increase groundwater to help local streams and creeks in times of drought.



Check back for more updates!

