

Minutes  
Meeting of Great Barrington Historical Commission  
July 25, 2011  
Great Barrington Fire Station (Conference Room 6)

ATTENDING: Marilyn Bisiewicz, Paul Ivory, Gary Leveille, David Rutstein; Guest: Gail E. Garrett, attorney representing Nick Kelley on Monument Mills.

MINUTES OF MAY 23, 2011: approved unanimously

INVENTORY OF HISTORICAL COMMISSION COLLECTION

- Tour of Town Collection: On July 20 Gary conducted Paul and Don on a tour of the town's historic collection in the Ramsdell Library. He also provided a briefing on the Historical Society's cataloguing and storage program for the collection.
- Long-Range Goals for Collection: The collections, consisting of objects and library and archival materials, are important artifacts documenting the history of Great Barrington. The Commission agreed on the following goals regarding the disposition of the collection.
  1. *Properly Preserve and Manage the Collection*: This is critical to ensuring its sound condition and ready availability for research, exhibition, education and publication programs undertaken by the commission, Historical Society and others.
  2. *Ultimately Transfer Ownership to Great Barrington Historical Society*: Because the GBHS will have the facilities and staff to care for, administer and make the collection available for public education and enjoyment, ownership should ultimately be deeded to that organization.
- Short Range Objectives for Collection: The following program is a general framework for the immediate work that needs to be accomplished. Details and action steps still need to be developed.
  1. *Identify All Items in Collection*: although the majority of the collection is stored in a discrete section of the Ramsdell Library, other pieces are in the Historical Society's Wheeler House, private homes and on loan to other organizations. Paul's draft email to Jim Parrish, requesting his assistance in locating town pieces, was approved.
  2. *Cataloguing Manual*: Based upon PastPerfect software, prepare a cataloguing manual that provides procedures for updating and completing the inventory. This will provide uniform guidance for volunteers.
  3. *Update Existing Inventory Forms* with actual location of each piece and entries for new accessions. If sufficient volunteer help is secured, transfer hand-written versions of the inventory to PastPerfect software form.
  4. *Mark Catalogue Number* on each object.
  5. *Concurrently, Upgrade Storage Conditions*, such as placing archival materials in acid free folders, labeling storage boxes and shelves to correspond with the location entered on the inventory form.
  6. *Appraisal and Insurance*: the inventory and locator entry for each object becomes the basis for an appraisal of the collection's market (dollar) value. This determines the amount of fine arts insurance required. The Commission needs to consult with the town comptroller (who is the risk manager?) regarding this project. Although the

majority of the collection will be appraised after the entire inventory is completed, those objects which are of obvious high cultural and replacement value, such as the Sibley clock, should be appraised and insured as soon as possible.

#### UPDATED MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

- Copies distributed to members

#### BROADBAND REQUEST TO HISTORICAL COMMISSION

- Commission members reviewed the MassBroadband route map and facility list (which includes historic buildings). Based upon this information and previous descriptions of the apparatus to be installed, the Historical Commission considers the project to have minimal to no impact on the cultural integrity of historic buildings in the town.
- Paul will draft a reply e-mail to Bob O'Haver that expresses this conclusion as well as ask a remaining question: will the network be connected to all homes? The draft will be circulated to the membership for comment.

#### MONUMENT MILLS NATIONAL REGISTER IMPLICATIONS FOR OVERLAY DISTRICT

- The Historical Commission supports development of Monument Mills that preserves the architectural integrity of the buildings. A historically-centered approach is fundamental to the rebirth of the mills' traditional role as the visual centerpiece and economic anchor of the village. The Commission needs to strongly express this recommendation to the town as well as remind both the town and any developers about the availability of state and federal historic tax credits and state and Section 106 restrictions placed on projects that receive state or federal funds. To be as accurate as possible in representing what is eligible for tax credits and subject to restrictions, the Commission must first know the exact buildings and boundaries delineated in the National Register designation. Paul will contact Chris Skelly about accessing sources that can provide a map or description that delineates the exact National Register area.
- Gail Garrett, a Mt. Washington attorney representing Nick Kelley, the principal for Monument Mills Management Trust, which owns a significant part of the mill complex, informed the Commission that because of serious structural problems, they need to undertake emergency repairs to the Beaming Bridge abutment and partial demolition (about 20') of the Beaming Bridge building. Mr. Kelley is applying for a permit to carry it out. MMTT is also applying for a building permit to shore up one end of the building. Ms. Garrett also offered to send material regarding the Mill's National Register nomination and boundaries. The Commission thanked Ms. Garrett for sharing her materials and information about the mills.

#### ALFORD BRIDGE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Paul will draft a response.

#### PRESERVATION OF RAILROAD PEDESTRIAN TUNNEL OVERSTRUCTURE

- Paul will draft recommendations.

## NEW ENGLAND LOG HOMES (GREAT BARRINGTON MANUFACTURING CO.) SALVAGE PROJECT

- On July 19 Gary, Paul and Carolyn Ivory explored the New England Log Homes site, with permission and access provided by Tim Geller, Community Development Corporation. The disintegrating site is scheduled to be razed as part of a program to reclaim the property to productive economic use. The team took documentary photographs of the site and rescued four artifacts that were deposited in the Commission storage area, Ramsdell Library: late 19<sup>th</sup> century faceplate to the mail chute at the front door, a brick, a ceramic insulator and a hanging light fixture.

## HISTORIC RESOURCES DRAFT FOR TOWN MASTER PLAN COMMITTEE

- The Commission agreed that there needs to be a heightened public awareness of the aesthetic, cultural and economic values of the town's historic resources. This will build public sensitivity and support of historic preservation issues. David's walking tours, lectures and articles in the Council on Aging's *The Grapevine* as well as Gary's *Berkshire Record* then and now articles, books and lectures were cited as examples of the sort of programs that can enhance local appreciation of the town's historic assets. More articles, brochures, exhibits, walking tours, etc. are needed to build the broadest possible base of support for preserving the buildings that give Great Barrington its character and represent its history.

## MAIN STREET RECONSTRUCTION PROJECT

- The Commission agreed that provisions for salvage archaeology need to be included in the Main St. reconstruction project. According to Chris Skelly, Ed Bell is the MHC contact for archaeology questions. Paul will email Ed to request advice about tactics and methodology. The Commission will then send a proposal to the Selectboard to incorporate it into the project.

## HOUSATONIC RIVER SKELETON LETTER UPDATE

- Gary reported that the state Medical Examiner Forensic Report concluded that the remains were Native American. Apparently, however, this was a mistaken analysis as the remains were parts of two bodies, one old and one new. Lion Miles called the report "amateurish." Too, the medical examiner office never notified Brona Simon, State Historic Preservation Officer. She was supposed to make a site visit.

## OTHER

- David suggested the Commission present a preservation planning program or seminar as a way to raise money.

## NEXT MEETING DATE

- Monday, September 26 at 7:00

## ADJOURN

- Members voted unanimously to adjourn.