

Minutes
Meeting of Great Barrington Historical Commission
March 8, 2012
Great Barrington Fire Station (Conference Room 6)

ATTENDING: Marilyn Bisciewicz, Malcolm Fick, Don Howe, Paul Ivory, Gary Leveille, Bill Nappo, David Rutstein

WELCOME TO BILL NAPPO

Members welcomed newly appointed member, Bill Nappo. Bill, who recently moved to Housatonic with his family, is a contractor who specializes in renovating older homes. He is a student in the University of Massachusetts historic preservation master's degree program at Hancock Shaker Village. Bill had submitted proposals for the Town's historic fire station and Town Hall. The latter was approved but actual work was deferred because of town budget issues. He has also submitted a bid for the West Stockbridge Town Hall renovation. Bill's expertise in construction and building trades is a valuable addition to the Commission's battery of talents.

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 26, AND NOVEMBER 28, 2011: Approved unanimously

REVISED MEMBERSHIP ROSTER

- Paul distributed the latest edition of the roster. Malcolm requested that his new telephone no. replace the one listed
- Marilyn, Malcolm and Gary, whose terms expire in 2012, each expressed the desire for another term and wondered when the next round of appointments will occur. Paul will e-mail Town Hall for clarification.

HERITAGE AREA GRANT PROJECT

- Paul expressed his thanks to Malcolm and the Commission members for their hard work on this project
- Malcolm distributed a spreadsheet expressing the status of completion of the various sites and reported that texts and site research assignments to members are being completed.
- They are assembling photographs and are experiencing no problems in securing permission for their use. The source of each photo will be credited. A current photo of the site will be included for context.
- The Commission agreed that use of the current name of a property, such as the business it occupies, to help with location and identification of the site, was legitimate.
- Paul and Gary will edit the draft texts. Their assignments need to be coordinated.
- The audio needs to be completed in May.
- Malcolm believed that the project will be ready for publication in June.
- Perhaps the app could be launched as part of a presentation to the Historical Society.

COLLECTIONS

- Ramsdell Library Storage Area: The Ramsdell Library is enhancing its public programming which involves increased use of the second floor. The Historical Commission and Society are concerned about the security of its objects stored in this public space during the library's events. Gary reported that Barbara Syer, of the Society, is going to meet with the Director to express the importance of the space to the Society and Commission and meeting the security challenges. The Commission will continue its cordial relationship with the library and work with them to protect the collections. Don asserted that in a worst case scenario, the

Commission should allow the town to find satisfactory storage for the collections. A copy of the collection inventory should be kept at the Ramsdell. Malcolm is working on this with the Society archivist.

- Mahaney Gift-Ruth Baldwin Collection: Mr. and Mrs. John Mahaney, Santa Cruz, CA, have written the Commission asking the Town's interest in accepting a gift of Great Barrington-related photographs, books, mementoes, newspapers and other materials. The collection belonged to former town resident, the late Ruth Baldwin. The Mahaneys are involved in distributing her estate. Paul has been in contact via telephone and e-mail, answering questions and making shipping arrangements. They evidently have a large amount of material and have requested guidance on what to send. The Commission agreed that in the absence of having a member on-site to evaluate each item, they should donate only those materials which have a clear connection to Great Barrington. Kevin O'Donnell has permitted the Commission to allow the Mahaneys to use the Town's FedEx number to ship the material. Paul will query Jack Wood, Berkshire Art Gallery, about the paintings by Merritt and Triscott that might be offered. He will also remain in contact with the Mahaneys to guide their assembly and shipment of material.

BUDGETS

- FY12:
 - ✓ No upfront budget funds are required for the Heritage Area grant
 - ✓ Projected expenditures include:
 - FedEx cost of shipping the Mahaney gift
 - Advertising for David's walks in June
 - Supplies for storing archival materials. Paul will e-mail Malcolm the shopping list and sources assembled by Marilyn.
- FY13: The Commission has not been notified by the Town Manager and Comptroller about the results of its budget submission. Paul will ask them about the status.

FY11 ANNUAL REPORT

- Paul prepared and submitted the annual report.

MONUMENT MILLS LETTER OF SUPPORT

- Paul prepared and submitted a Historical Commission endorsement of Monument Mills Revitalization's application for a Massachusetts Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit for its proposed redevelopment of the Monument Mills. This letter was for the second of two applications to date.

GREAT BARRINGTON MANUFACTURING CO./NEW ENGLAND LOG HOMES

- Porch Column: the solid oak column from the entry porch that was rescued during the razing has been transported to the Wheeler House where the Historical Society has generously agreed to store it.
- New England Log Homes Sign: has been donated to the Commission by the CDC. It is in their office on Bridge St. The Commission needs to collect the sign and transport it to storage either at Ramsdell Library or, with permission, at the Wheeler House.
- Smokestack: the commission has been in ongoing discussion with the CDC about the preservation of the 100' high smokestack as dramatic evidence of the town's industrial past. Eric Hagberg, a structural engineer from Atlanta, and a Great Barrington native who used to play on the stack as a child, paid his own expenses to contribute his professional services to analyze its structural stability, prescribe the work needed to preserve it and estimate the cost

of preservation. Bill will serve as the Commission's liaison for this project and contact Tim Geller.

- Siren: Bill will also call Mike Fitzpatrick about the existence and whereabouts of the siren, which was blown midday at the plant, and a tape recording of it.

COMMUNITY PRESERVATION ACT

- David, who has been representing the Commission at the CPA meetings, reported that passage of this act can make available matching funding for historic preservation projects. There is a two-step voter approval process: majority votes at both the Town Meeting and at the polls in the November election. It is important for members of the Commission to speak in favor of it, publicly and privately.

EGREMONT HISTORICAL COMMISSION

- Historic Preservation Forum: Don, Bill, David and Gary will attend the session presented by the MHC's Christopher Skelly on March 29.
- Collaboration Talks: Maxine Lome, Chair of the Egremont Historical Commission, has approached the Commission, through Paul, about exploring collaboration efforts at an informal meeting. The membership agreed that the Commission should respond favorably. Paul and Bill will call Maxine to set up a preliminary discussion.

STATE REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

- MHC has sent two complete volumes of the *State Register of Historic Places, 2011* to the town. The Town retained one copy with the remaining one for the GBHC and/or the GBHDC. Jim Mercer of the GBHDC generously gave up their claim to the GBHC since it already had a copy of the previous year's edition.

NATIONAL GRID INSTALLATION OF NEW STREETLIGHTS ON RAILROAD STREET

- The Commission agreed that in response to a component in the Main Street reconstruction project for National Grid to install new street lights on Railroad Street, if it becomes included in the scope of the project, to write a letter to the Selectmen requesting the Commission be consulted to ensure that period-appropriate fixtures are chosen.

NEXT MEETING DATE

- Monday, May 21 at 7:00pm, Fire Station

ADJOURN

- The membership voted unanimously to adjourn.