

**Town of North Stonington, CT
HEWITT FARM COMMITTEE**

WORKSHOP MINUTES

**Monday, April 18, 2016 at 3:00 p.m.
Stephen Main Homestead
North Stonington Historical Society**

The joint workshop of the North Stonington Historical Society's "Greene Gables" Committee and the Hewitt Farm Committee was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Co-chair Nita Kincaid. Representing the "Greene Gables" Committee were Frank Eppinger, Tobias Goodman, William Peterson and Richard Seager. Representing the Hewitt Farm Committee were members Ellie Banker, Brian Banker, Ed Harasimowitz and Nita Kincaid. Member Dick (Coop) Cooper also attended, arriving at 3:05 p.m. Also in attendance were members of the Community Garden Association, Bill and Mary Ann Ricker,

1) Approve 03/21/2016 Meeting Minutes

Ellie Banker motioned and Ed Harasimowitz seconded to approve the Hewitt Farm Committee's 03/21/2016 Meeting Minutes. The motion carried.

2) Background & History of Greene Gables

After opening the meeting, Nita turned it over to Frank Eppinger, President of the Historical Society, who began his presentation by familiarizing the group with the Historical Society, its Stephen Main Homestead, and the Dye House. He explained the Society's interest in Greene Gables and how that interest came about, citing such things as the Society's collection of Greene's paintings and photographs, Tobias Goodman's recently published book about the photographs, Fred Stewart Greene's connection to the Town of North Stonington, and his place in history and the art world.

Frank also provided the 03/2016 Assessor's Property Cards for 3 Hewitt Road (the cabin) and 8 & 14 Hewitt Road (Greene Gables) for the group's reference.

3) Listing of Greene Gables on the State of Connecticut Register of Historic Places as part of the Creative Places Grant Initiative Project

Frank distributed copies of the completed *Connecticut State Register of Historic Places Registration Form*, with attachments "A" through "E", 08/08/2015, which included correspondence with Mary Dunn, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer; Jenny Scofield, National Register and State Register Coordinator; and Shawn Murphy, First Selectman for the Town of North Stonington. Frank briefly described the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) program and its goals.

Frank next reviewed the history of Greene Gables as it is known and documented in the registration package submitted to the SHPO. The package included the 01/14/2016 letter from the Historical Society to the Board of Selectmen requesting support for the application, the 03/15/2016 PRESS RELEASE "Listing of Greene Gables Cottage at North Stonington's Hewitt Farm on the State of Connecticut Register of Historic Places," and the article "Listing of Greene Gables" by Frank Eppinger that was published in the 04/2016 *Historical Society Newsletter*.

Frank also distributed the 07/06/2014 article published in *The Day* regarding the Historical Society's interest in Greene Gables, and talked about Fred Stewart Greene's life, works and associations with Westerly, Florida and North Stonington.

Nita asked several questions and offered some insight into Mr. Greene's life and work. Bill Peterson added that the Slater Museum in Norwich is planning an exhibit of Mr. Greene's work some time in the near future.

Frank next distributed photographs, which show Greene Gables' connection to the "Plein Air" movement and, in later years, Ruth Penfield's Little Red Horse Nursery School, the first Montessori School in Southeastern Connecticut. Frank stated that this history alone should be enough to warrant preservation of the structure. Ellie Banker offered some information on Ruth Penfield's operation and stated that Mrs. Penfield had an excellent reputation among Montessori schools.

Frank then distributed copies of the "Historical and Cultural Resources" section of the *North Stonington Plan of Conservation and Development*. This section identifies and briefly describes the resources. Greene Gables is included. Bill Ricker noted that similar information is also contained in the town's *Conservation Commission Plan*. Frank showed a map titled "Cultural Resource Map," also from the plan. It includes Greene Gables in that use category.

Frank distributed copies of the July/August 2016 FACT SHEET from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation announcing its *Creative Places* program. The sheet describes places very similar to Greene Gables that are included in the program. Frank further stated that he had been in communication with several local citizens who indicated an interest in preserving the corncrib.

Frank distributed copies of *Greene Gables – Evaluation and Recommendations*, a draft dated 11/2013 that Selectman Donahue had provided as a possible outline of the Society's position and rationale for preserving Greene Gables. Frank stated that the Historical Society has not yet responded because it wants to wait until more information is available.

4) Identification of Stakeholders of a Greene Gables Stabilization/Restoration

Frank next addressed what would be required to stabilize or restore Greene Gables. He stated doubt that North Stonington currently has sufficient funds or a voter willingness to perform this kind of work. He further stated that the building would have to be put to a use that justifies its cost and must be self-sufficient in both its maintenance and operation.

Nita showed the group a breakdown of the Hewitt Farm's income and expenses for the past three year. She noted that the Town budget carries a \$5000 line item for maintenance of the Hewitt Farm and explained that the amount spent each year varies based on required upkeep. The committee expects to spend most of its budgeted money this current fiscal year and has requested the same \$5000 line item in the 2016/2017 budget. Nita also explained that there is repair work of some structural beams in the basement that must be done on the 1750 Farm House and that we have submitted a request to add \$10,000 to the budget for this capital improvement. The committee has agreed that the 1750 house is the highest priority. The group also briefly talked about the condition of the cabin. There are currently no plans for it.

Frank concluded this part of his presentation by stating that to be viable in the future, Greene Gables must soon be stabilized or restored. Nita added that it would be necessary for the electors of the Town to approve either of these.

5) Need for a Current Assessment of Physical Condition of Greene Gables

Frank described what he believes is required in order to proceed. The present condition of the structure and what it will need to shield it from the weather and vandals should be determined. The group agreed a professional appraisal of the structure's condition is an essential step. It was suggested that estimates of condition and required steps for stabilization be obtained from three local contractors by the Historical Society,

6) Potential Public Uses for a Renovated Greene Gables

The group next discussed a few possible future uses for Greene Gables. There was, however, no consensus as to a best use of the building.

7) Non-Governmental Funding Sources for Stabilization/Restoration Purposes

Frank pointed out that the use of Greene Gables might have to be associated with its source of funding. He stated that the Historical Society is not "tied" to making the building a museum.

The group discussed grant-writing experiences and identified some sources for future grant funding. Frank distributed Information regarding the Community Foundation of

Eastern Connecticut and its *2015 Letz Environmental Grants* awards. This opened a discussion on “lessons-learned” when applying for grants.

8) Selectmen/Town Meeting Approval Needed to Move Forward

The group agreed that in order to obtain approval from North Stonington's electors to do anything with Greene Gables, it will be necessary to present a clear picture of what needs to be done and why. This must be “spelled out” in a written plan.

Nita reminded the group that there are many things that could be done to honor Fred Stewart Greene even if Greene Gables is demolished. Such examples are found in many different forms throughout America's parks and historic sites.

9) Steps to go Forward

The group agreed that the Historical Society's Greene Gables Committee would seek the help of at least three professional contractors to determine what it would cost to stabilize Greene Gables from the elements and for security. The Historical Society committee will also investigate the possibility of employing a grant-writer and look into other grants possible for this type of project. Once stabilization information becomes available it should be possible for the Historical Society committee to draft a *Plan of Action*. After such a plan is developed, another meeting with the Hewitt Farm Committee could be held to consider the draft plan.

10) Priorities for May 2, 2016 Hewitt Farm Committee Meeting

- Review and discussion of the Joint NSHS/HFC meeting
- Replacement of trail signs
- Eagle Scout Project
- Proposed school/library event

Respectfully submitted, Richard B. Cooper

Handouts at the April 18th Joint NSHS/HFC Meeting

“Greene Gables – Evaluation and Recommendations” (Draft), dated 11/2013

Assessor's Property Cards for 3 Hewitt Road (a.k.a. “The Cabin”) and 8 & 14 Hewitt Road (a.k.a. “Greene Gables”), 03/2016.

“Leaving Summer Behind” (Tim Martin) photograph published in *The Day*, 09/27/2016.

Photographs of Fred Stewart Greene and “Greene Gables” when it was used as a Montessori Nursery School.

“Listing of 'Greene Gables'” (Frank Eppinger) article in the *Historical Society Newsletter*, 04/2016.

“Listing of Greene Gables Cottage at North Stonington's Hewitt Farm on the State of Connecticut Register of Historic Places” (Press Release), North Stonington Historical Society, 03/15/2016.

Connecticut State Register of Historic Places Registration Form (completed), with attachments “A” through “E” and associated correspondence, 08/08/2015.

Creative Places, letter from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation announcing the Creative Places project.

Letter requesting support, North Stonington Historical Society to Board of Selectmen, 01/14/2016.

Article published in *The Day* regarding the Historical Society's interest in “Greene Gables,” 07/06/2014.

Acknowledgments and Section 6, “Historical and Cultural Resources,” from the *North Stonington Plan of Conservation and Development*, 12/12/2013.

Tidings, publication of the Friends of Virgin Islands National Park, 04/2016.

Article published in *The Day* regarding restoration of the Spicer Mansion in Mystic, 04/09/2016.

Information regarding the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut and its 2015 Letz Environmental Grants awards.