

Minutes  
Meeting of Great Barrington Historical Commission  
November 14, 2016, 7:00pm  
Meeting Room  
Great Barrington Fire Station  
37 State road  
Great Barrington, MA 01230

ATTENDING:

- *Members:* Malcolm Fick, Paul Ivory, Gary Leveille, Bill Nappo, David Rutstein

MINUTES OF SEPTEMBER 12, 2016

- Under Don's report in the "Other Business" section, p. 4, delete the words "to the."
- Paul will insert the edit.
- On a motion by Malcolm and a second by Gary, the Minutes of September 12, 2016, with the edit, passed unanimously.

COLLECTIONS

A. Ramsdell Environmental Controls

- With Don's absence, reports and discussion were deferred to the next meeting.

B. Don Victor Collection

- Paul reported that the Commission received the bill from the Historical Society for reimbursement of expenses incurred during the storage and transportation of the 180 bank boxes to the Ramsdell second floor. The bill is \$1234.76. Because the Commission had voted to expend up to \$1,100 at its July 11, 2016 meeting, he requested a motion to increase the amount to cover the bill.
- A motion by Malcolm and a second by David to increase the amount of funds allotted to reimburse the Great Barrington Historical Society by \$134.76 to yield the total of \$1234.76 passed unanimously. Gary abstained because of his attendance of Society board meetings.

C. Veterans Graves Book

- Gary showed the book to the Commission. Its contents include drawings of tombstones and locator maps. The book is a survey of veterans' graves and was produced as a WPA project; the date on the book is 1938. Gary observed that it was prepared in a "superb manner." Other Berkshire towns undertook the same project. Those towns north of Great Barrington turned their books and reports over to the federal program. Fortunately, and for reasons unknown, Great Barrington and towns to our south, retained their books. It was stored for decades in the Cemetery Commission archives. Buddy Atwood became aware of this unique resource and concerned for its future stewardship and donated the book to the Commission so it could be preserved and made available to the public.
- In researching the possible existence of the book's contents via other venues and the various options to make it accessible to the public (mostly genealogists), Gary found that there were no duplicates at the Berkshire Athanaeum; it has the records of other towns but not Great Barrington. The Athanaeum and other sources confirmed that the book is an extremely useful resource. Once the contents are converted to a digital format they can be made available through the Athanaeum and town websites for facile public access.
- Chicago Albumen Works in Housatonic submitted a proposal to digitize and assemble the book, including the drawings, into a searchable PDF for a cost of \$1,392.40. The contents can be placed on a thumb drive to use in printing hard copies. The PDF is easily attachable to web sites.
- A motion by Gary, seconded by Bill, to spend \$1,392.40 for Chicago Albumen Works to digitize the book into a searchable PDF was passed unanimously. Gary will contact Oleg and oversee the project.

- Paul congratulated and thanked Gary and Malcolm for their work and dogged research in determining the best options for achieving the project preservation and public accessibility goals. He cited particularly their research that confirmed this data is not available elsewhere.
- Even though genealogists will be the most frequent consumers, Bill suggested notifying the VFW of the existence of this resource.
- Malcolm noted that this project is so worthwhile there may be other resources in the collection that could be made available as well following the same digitization approach. Gary said that this could be part of the archivists job description and annual work goals.

#### D. Kormanik Collection

- Paul reviewed the provenance of the sizable collection of the south county working files, maps and records of surveyor Bill Kormanik, now owned by local surveyor Alexander Thorp. Gary reported on his inquiries at various local history repositories about their interest in receiving the collection. The Berkshire County Historical Society didn't have sufficient space. The Berkshire Athanaeum expressed some interest and Gary arranged for contact with Alex Thorp. To date he doesn't know of any results. The membership concurred with Gary's assessment that our involvement has reach its limit for now. A challenge is that although the collection includes much Great Barrington property, there are also lots of other south Berkshire and Connecticut towns represented. Paul thanked Gary for his work in exploring potential long term repositories where this collection can be preserved and used by the public.

#### E. Archivist

- The elevation of Margaret Cherin's archival job at Simons Rock of Bard College to a full time position has unfortunately eliminated her from continuing her work with the Commission. Paul has approached Bernie Drew about the position who expressed interest in it. He will set a date for Bernie to meet for a tour of the archives and a briefing by Gary. Paul will also bring a copy of the standard letter of agreement to the meeting.
- Discerning resources that would be appropriate for digitization will be added to the Archivist's job description.

#### CLINTON AME ZION CHURCH

- A group is being formed to purchase, preserve and create a program of use for the Clinton AME Zion Church. The building is important, listed on the National Register and poor condition. Emergency repairs to the leaking roof are needed before winter to secure the building. Paul attended the initial public meeting which included a group of diverse people who are eager to contribute their professional talents to the effort. On behalf of the Commission, Paul volunteered to conduct foundation research. At this point the Commission's involvement will be public support for preservation of the building and Paul's foundation research.

#### HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

- Paul attended the "Start-Up" meeting with Neil Larson at MHC in Boston on October 14 where priorities, methodologies, bureaucratic responsibilities and phase schedules were discussed. On October 28 Neil Larson and Wally Wheeler, the two survey principals, met with Paul and Gary in Great Barrington. Gary provided them with a briefing and tour of the historical collection at the Ramsdell and with Paul conducted an extensive windshield tour of the properties on the sites list the Commission prepared for the project. We also met with Chris Rembold to discuss the production of the maps required as part of the survey and toured the vault in the basement of the town hall where property, survey, deed and land-related archival materials are stored.
- The consultants will next review their findings and prepare the first draft of the list of sites and potential districts that will be included as part of the first phase. The final version of the list will be produced as

part of the second phase. The list is the all-important foundation of the work program and final product. Once approved by the Commission and MHC it will allow the consultants and the Commission to focus research and documentation efforts on the final phase 1 product. The consultants felt that with all of the town's historic resources, the survey work will surpass the original estimate of three separate surveys.

#### REVIEW OF FY17 BUDGET AND WORK PLAN

- Referring to "FY17 Budget and Work Plan Implementation Sheet," Paul reviewed and summarized the status of the FY budget. The income side includes \$7,470 in the approved FY17 budget and \$9,967 in unspent remainder funds which equals \$17,437. In addition, there is also \$2,144 in a donated funds account. Thus, the total funding available is \$19,581. At Malcolm's suggestion, Paul will reconfigure the column summary to remove the perception that the \$9,967 is for the walking tour brochure.
- Paul will update the budget and work plan to reflect the projects and expenditures discussed at the meeting.

#### CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROJECT

- In Don's absence, discussion was deferred to the next meeting.

#### VOTE ON DRAFT ANNUAL REPORT

- On a motion by Malcolm and a second by Gary the draft FY16 Annual Report for the Commission was approved unanimously.

#### CITIZENS' SPEAK

- No participants

#### OTHER BUSINESS

- Housatonic School
  - Paul read key parts of an October 25, 2016 letter from Ross W. Dekle, Preservation Planner, MHC, that acknowledged receipt of the additional information on the Housatonic School submitted by GBHC. Dekle reported that it is MHC's "opinion that not only is the Housatonic Grammar School eligible for nomination to the National Register, but the associated playing field and the Housatonic Community Center are also significant and meet criteria for listing. We feel that it would be best to nominate the entire complex. . . . The next step in this process would be to have a nomination form created for this potential district."
  - Paul thanked Bill Nappo for his work in taking dozens of photographs documenting the interior and exterior of the buildings.
  - In its finding that the school met the criteria for historical for the Town's application a \$50,000 CPA grant, the GBHC expressed support for the proposed envelope study. Unfortunately, the town, fearing rejection of the project at the town meeting because of a hesitation to expend funds on a building which will be sold and that should be the responsibility of the new owner, withdrew its application.
- Newsboy Monument
  - Bill reported that the new water pump in the fountain needs to be turned off and drained to prevent damage from freezing temperatures. The Town used to hire John Malloy to perform this task. Paul will call Pete Soules.
- World War II Exhibit and Lecture
  - Gary reported that Bob Kroll at the Historical Society has curated a superb World War II exhibit.
  - David will presents a talk at the Senior Center on Pearl Harbor on December

#### NEXT MEETING

- Monday January 9, 2017 at a place to be determined.