

Minutes  
Meeting of Great Barrington Historical Commission  
July 17, 2017, 7:00pm  
Meeting Room  
Great Barrington Fire Station  
37 State road  
Great Barrington, MA 01230

ATTENDING:

- *Members:* Malcolm Fick, Don Howe, Paul Ivory, Gary Leveille, David Rutstein, Marilyn Bisiewicz
- *Media:* Eileen Mooney

MINUTES OF MAY 8, 2017

- On a motion by Malcolm and a second by Gary, the Minutes of May 8, 2017 passed unanimously.

COLLECTIONS

Don Victor Collection

- Paul and Gary reported that Archivist Bernie has completed the initial phase of organizing and cataloguing this collection. In a summary of work prepared by Bernie and distributed to the Commission, Bernie reported that the collection comprises a total of "199 regular and over-size banker boxes of black-and-white and, from later years, color photographs of people, businesses and events in Great Barrington, Mass., and surrounding towns, 1976-2015."
- Bernie has also completed two documents: a Finding Aid, which includes a Victor biography and a box-by-box description of contents and an alphabetized index of folder contents (including cross-references).
- Paul and Gary praised the amazing job Bernie has done in making sense of a huge collection and providing the mechanics for access by the public.
- Gary stressed the need to establish policies for access by the public, to include scanning and cost structure, and determining the disposition of the many duplicates. Paul said that these are complex issues and the Commission should seek advice from other repositories that have experienced the same challenges. Malcolm suggested establishing regular hours for the archivist so that the public would know when the collection would be available for use and in a secure manner.
- Shelving to store the boxes need to be purchased and installed but at this point this task isn't a priority emergency.
- Gary observed that an unplanned result of the air conditioning installed on the first floor is the cooling of the second floor, the temperature level of which is "appreciably lower."

Berkshire News Project

- Bernie Drew has donated a complete and loosely bound run of the *Berkshire News*, a newspaper published in Great Barrington from 1889-1895, to the Historical Commission. A history of the publication and a finding aid prepared by Bernie was distributed to the Commission. This is a unique and extremely valuable resource for the town and on behalf of the town and the Commission, Paul acknowledged Bernie's generosity in making this gift. He said that the Commission needs to complete accessioning and cataloguing forms and a thank you letter.

HISTORIC RESOURCES SURVEY

- Paul summarized the survey project for Eileen.
  - A consultant architectural historian is completing Phase I (of up to three) of a project to update and digitize the town's 30 year-old ***Inventory of Historic Resources***. The present catalogue, completed in 1985 includes 463 survey forms documenting the buildings, structures, objects, areas, burial grounds, landscape features and sites that are of historical, architectural, or archaeological importance to our community, the state, or the nation. The consultant will also identify and prepare forms for those assets not included in the 1985 work.

- The town has hired Larson Fisher Associates, Woodstock, NY, to complete area forms for the Brooklyn neighborhood in Great Barrington and Risingdale neighborhood of mill houses, as well as 45 individual sites not included on the 1985 survey.
- The \$30,000 cost is being funded by matching grants from the CPA and Massachusetts Historical Commission
- The inventory is a fundamental tool to implement preservation projects and programs, including:
  - ✓ Nomination of Sites to National and State Registers of Historic Places
  - ✓ Identification of Potential Historic Districts
  - ✓ Preservation and Community Development Planning
  - ✓ Public Education Through Interpretive Programs
  - ✓ Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) Review of Federal Projects
  - ✓ Historic Preservation Tax Credits
- Paul distributed an updated draft of "Historic Resources Survey Update: Part 1" which includes a master list of the survey sites and notes on their status. To date, the first drafts of the Brooklyn Neighborhood Area Forms (approximately 135 properties) and 38 of 45 Building Forms have been completed. The Risingdale Neighborhood Area Form and seven Building Forms remain to be completed.
- Paul thanked the review committee members, with special acknowledgment to Bernie and Gary who have unselfishly contributed their unique and hard-earned knowledge of local history to the consultants to greatly enhance the content and scholarship of the documentation.
- Paul also praised Larson Fisher Associates whose work is scholarly, thorough and professional. The only issue has been meeting deadlines in Phase 3 which has necessitated an extension of the project deadline.
- Paul also distributed a copy of the deliverables that the consultants must submit at the end of the project.

#### SEARLES POWER HOUSE

- In response to Paul's request for advice and guidance on the Commission's role in preservation of the power house, Chris Rembold stated that its preservation was not mandated by the town; it is a public service donation by the developer. He advised the Commission to express its support of the effort and offer historic preservation guidance. The Commission reviewed and approved Paul's draft of the e-mail to Michael Charles of Benchmark Development.

#### FY18 BUDGET AND WORK PLAN

- Paul distributed copies of the updated FY18 Budget and Work Plan for the membership to review. He noted that the \$21,536 budget is comprised of \$11,902 remainder funds carried forward, \$2,144 donated funds and \$7,490 in the FY18 figure approved at the Town Meeting.
- Paul noted that he needs to contact Josh at Dadaelus for the annual Newsboy maintenance.

#### SEARLES HIGH SCHOOL DOCUMENTATION PROJECT

- Paul distributed "Draft #3 Updated List of Objects To Be Rescued from Searles High School." He noted that he added the relief date numerals from the corner to the right of the main entrance to the gym and deleted the cornerstone to the gym (non-existent). As a result of the May 6 tour of the building, Marilyn reported that the Commission members recommend adding the electronic alarm enunciator located at the bottom of the stairs by the cafeteria in the annex.
- Marilyn, who had taught in the annex, remembered the frigid temperatures in the building during the winter.
- David complimented the developer's excellent cooperation in this project.

#### HISTORIC MARKER PROGRAM INSTRUCTION REVISIONS

- Don reported that the application form and the price list are being revised. He has requested a proof of the plaque design.

- There are five or six applications submitted that need to be reviewed by the Committee (Gary, Jim Mercer, Paul and Don). This requires a meeting.

#### CITIZENS' SPEAK

- No participants

#### OTHER BUSINESS

##### CTSB Gift

- Gary reported that CTSB has followed through with the project to jettison their digital archives of town meetings (dating to the latter 1990's) and contacted him to retrieve the cassettes. He picked up both Great Barrington's and Sheffield's. The former is at the Ramsdell archives and latter at the Sheffield Historical Society.
- Paul thanked Gary for his initiative and follow-through on this project which brings an important resource to the collection.

##### Dendrochronology in Great Barrington

- Gary shared a copy of an e-mail the Historical Society had received from Michael J. Cuba, an associate of Dr. Daniel Miles from the Oxford (UK) Dendrochronology Laboratory. Dr. Miles will be attending a conference in NY in November and has asked if there any samplings he could take while he is here. With its ample number of historic structures, he thought there might be some good candidates in Great Barrington.
- Gary said the Wheeler house could use this kind of documentation but that the process is usually prohibitively expensive. Paul thought that maybe the offer was as a donated community service. He will check with Bob about their interest in the project and e-mail Mr. Cuba and ask about any costs involved.

#### NEXT MEETING

- Monday, September 11, 2017 at 7:00pm. Site to be determined.

#### ADJOURN