

Report of the Historical Commission (2017)

Town Meeting Warrant Article in 2017

With the assistance of the late Stephanie Mercandetti, Director of Community & Economic Development, HC members rewrote Article XVII of the Medway General By-Laws, *Building Demolition*, and the article was approved by voters at Town Meeting on November 13th. This by-law offers more protection for some of Medway's historic buildings and has been submitted to the Massachusetts Attorney General for final approval.

Notices of Intent to Demolish

The HC was notified that the old building at 155A Village Street, behind Town Hall, which housed the old Men's Club for many years, was condemned as unsafe and has been demolished. Notices of intent to demolish the houses at **181 Main Street, 179 Main Street, 250 Main Street, 5 Highland Street, 58 Oakland Street, and 22-24 Evergreen** were filed in 2017. Commission members determined the houses located at 58 Oakland and 250 Main were not historically significant and no further involvement of the HC was needed. The others were determined to be historically significant due to their locations and/or unique architecture, and public hearings were held to help determine their fate. The house at 5 Highland, while significant, had deteriorated to the point of being unsafe and subject to condemnation, and no delay of demolition was imposed. The house has since been demolished and a new one built in its place. The houses at 181 Main, 179 Main, and 22-24 Evergreen were determined to be preferably preserved, and each had a nine-month demolition-delay imposed on it. It is hoped that the owners/developers of these properties will find a way to preserve or incorporate them into their future plans for the properties as their loss would change the entire character of their neighborhood.

Evergreen Cemetery

Required documentation for the application to have the cemetery recognized on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) is nearly complete as a result of Vice-Chairman Paul Russell's efforts. Historical preservation consultant Stacey Goodale Wetstein has offered advice as Paul's work of photographing and researching grave markers and those buried here, and tracking it all on a spreadsheet, has proceeded. We anticipate that the repair and restoration of more tombstones by preservation specialist Kai Nalenz will take place in 2018.

Oakland Cemetery's Forgotten Civil War Veterans

The project to place markers at the graves of six Civil War veterans at Oakland Cemetery, begun several years ago by former member Mark Wilcox, then taken on by HC Vice-Chairman Paul Russell, culminated in a dedication ceremony arranged by Paul and Civil War historian Tom Ellis, author of *Civil War Service, Medway and Millis*, honoring the soldiers at the site on Veterans' Day, November 11th. Using available resources, including a previously unknown 1930's-era map compiled through a Works Projects Administration effort, Paul researched the lives and service of the six men, submitted the information to the Veterans Administration, and they shipped six headstones. Gravestone preservationist Kai Nalenz installed them, and Roger Cummings, administrator of Oakland Cemetery, arranged for installation of a 20-foot flagpole, purchased with CPA funds, at the site. The cemetery donated a flag to the project, as well. The dedication ceremony was well-attended and included an honor guard of Civil War re-enactors

from the 13th Massachusetts Infantry as well as a Medway High School bugler playing “Taps” to conclude the ceremony.

Historic Resource Sites

Jacob Ide House, 158 Main Street

Given the importance of Dr. Ide in Medway’s history, the proximity of his house to Rabbit Hill National Historic District, and the excellent condition of the old house, the HC voted to designate it as a Historic Resource.

G.A.R. Site, Village Street and Norfolk Ave.

Because of its significance in the late 1800’s and into the 1900’s, this site was voted as a Historic Resource in Medway.

Boston Post Cane

Paul Russell arranged for the purchase of a replica of the old Boston Post Cane for Medway, using CPA funds. The cane will be engraved for Medway, as the original was, and specifications for awarding the cane to the oldest Medway citizen will be formulated.

Deed-Restricted Historic Properties

The hose tower at the old Torrent Fire House (195-197 Main Street) continues to deteriorate. Plans for its repair are unknown at this time.

Plaques for Historic Houses

HC member Cher Hamilton will continue working on this project as Alex Burinskiy resigned due to his work load. Alex met with the Design Review Committee and heard their recommendation for the design of a plaque and a business that makes them.

Digitizing the Comprehensive Survey of Medway Properties

Paul has numbered and scanned both of these books, making them more useful to HC members and to anyone researching Medway houses and other properties.

Ongoing Projects

Model of Old Town Hall

Former member Alex Burinskiy located an architecture student who is interested in our project of building a model of the original Town Hall (to be kept at the Historical Society Museum but placed on rotating display at Town Hall, the library, the schools, and possibly other locations frequented by the public). Since Alex’s departure from the HC, Paul is the contact person. The project is on hold until the student graduates.

Plaques for Historic Houses

Cher Hamilton will continue working on this project, taking over for Alex Burinskiy, who resigned due to his work load. Alex met with the Design Review Committee, seeking their input for the design of a plaque.

Historic Garnsey (Guernsey) Property

We would like to see further protection of this site, which may involve an archeological dig to locate pertinent artifacts. Bruce has looked into this.

Some of the topics of discussion for future consideration have included the following: cleaning the portrait of Sanford (currently displayed at Town Hall); identifying and placing site markers at historic Medway sites such as the Coffey house and the old Dry Bridge, to help people recognize Medway's rich history; compiling a booklet of historic parts of Evergreen Cemetery; creating a book of photos from Medway's collection of about 150 glass images, which Paul has digitized. giving more people the opportunity to see them; arranging for preservation of more old town records;

Personnel: Officers are: Chairman-Jeanne Johnson; Vice-Chairman-Paul Russell; Treasurer-Eugene Liscombe; CPC Representative-Eugene Liscombe. Bruce Hamblin (appointed in 2017), Alex Burinskiy resigned this year, and Cher Hamilton was appointed. Two more members are still needed. We thank all members for their service to the Town on this Commission.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne Johnson, Chairman