

Merrimack Heritage Commission –
Meeting Minutes 20-November-2023

Attendance: Heritage Commission – Chip Pollard, John Frechette, Lon Woods

Guests – John Lastowka (Historical Society), Chuck Mower (Historical Society),
Larry Shower (Historical Society), Barbara Healey

1910 hrs: Meeting called to order by John Frechette

1910 hrs: Introductions

- Lon Woods had returned as a member. He is familiar with everyone present. Finlay Rothaus has taken over as the Town Councilor ex-officio.

1915 hrs: Review and approval of prior minutes

- It is noted that the June meeting was the last formal business meeting. We had no proposed summer meetings in July and August. Due to staff changes at the Town Hall, the Commission was unable to access the meeting room for the September meeting. There was no quorum for the October meeting. Chip and Lon had an informal discussion.
- The minutes from the June meeting were read and reviewed. Motion to approve the minutes. 2 votes to accept, 1 abstain. Motion carried.

1930 hrs: Heritage Commission and Historical Society property

- Barbara explained that she resigned from the Commission as a means to help with membership. The Planning Board is to appoint a representative to the Heritage Commission. She is both a Town Councilor and on the Planning Board, so there is a conflict for her remaining on the Heritage Commission. She expressed that she will miss working with us.
- Barbara met with Janet Foster. She is the Commander of the VFW and Anita Creager's daughter. Janet located boxes of items belonging to the Heritage Commission and the Historical Society in Anita's house. The boxes of items were brought to the meeting to be returned.
- One item of particular interest is a ladies' wool hat made by the Merrimac Hat Corporation. John L. advised the hat was made by the Burnap sisters, who lived on the farm at Turkey Hill Road and McQuestion Road. They were famous for their hats. The hat was turned over to the Historical Society for preservation.

1945 hrs: Hannah Jack-Thornton gravesite

- John F advised that he received correspondence with Ellen Brinker of the Descendants of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence (DSDI). She advised that their organization has already placed bronze markers on the gravesites of the Signers and are now working on honoring the wives of the Signers. The DSDI would like to place a

bronze marker on the gravesite of Hannah Jack-Thornton prior to the nation's 250th celebration in 2026.

- John L. suggested the next step should be to contact the NH Old Graveyard Association for information on restrictions and suggestions on how the marker could be displayed. John L. is to email contact information.

1955 hrs: Project Status Review

- **Thomas More College gravesite** – Chip advised that he has not heard from Tricia Fair. She was arranging a second site investigation by another graveyard specialist. With winter approaching, it is doubtful anything will take place until spring.
- **Signage** – John F. advised that at a previous meeting, we sketched a proposed design for historical signs for the historic schoolhouse, firehouse, and train depot sites. The next step would be to contact sign manufacturers to obtain estimates of the cost of the signs.
- John F initiated a discussion regarding the granite Incorporated in 1750 signs at Watson Park and the Town Hall. There was a previous discussion about the second incorporation date being confusing to residents and having the granite signs corrected. Chuck advised that the second incorporation date is the more significant date and suggested that the signs remain. Lon and Chip advised that the date on the signs was the topic of years of discussion and debate, and it appears the discussions will continue. John F advised that we could at least start with inquiries to granite companies for solutions to the engraving and go from there.
- **Reeds Ferry Landing** - John F. discussed the site walk at the Reeds Ferry Landing site that took place in April. He spoke with Highway Director Dawn Tuomola about clean-up and maintenance of the site and a proposed walking path. Dawn advised the biggest issue is getting the heavy equipment needed access to the site. The equipment cannot fit under the bridge, and access across the railroad tracks is a political issue. Chuck advised that the Town may have a historic crossing right-of-way that should be researched.
- John F advised there is a large oak tree on the property that we are seeking to have designated as a New Passaconaway Tree. John L. advised that Mary Tebo-Davis from the UNH Cooperative is nearing retirement. In his discussions with her, the tree would not be considered a champion tree in the county. John F advised that even though it is not a champion tree, it can still be designated as a New Passaconaway Tree by resolution through the Town Council.

2005 hrs: Commission Files

- All present made a brief inspection and review of the items in the boxes obtained from Anita's residence. John L advised that when Anita was involved with both the Heritage Commission and the Historical Society she would arbitrarily remove files and artifacts to her residence and the items would often be mixed together. He advised that Anita was hesitant to return items from her residence, and more boxes of historical items are unaccounted for and have probably been disposed of.
- One box contained books and artifacts, such as historic milk bottles. Two books were pristine copies of the History of Merrimack Vol 1 and 2. John L. advised that Anita sent

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the proofs of the books to the printers, and none of that information ever returned. A first edition was sacrificed and dismantled to produce the second printing of the books. Ralph Gerenz and Linda Tomasian may have more information regarding the book printing. A second box had files that included maps and photographs. The third box contained cleaning solutions for graveyard headstones. Chip advised that all of the documents should be scanned and shared. It may be worth looking to hire a professional scanning company to scan all the files. John F suggested that all of the items in the boxes should be stored at the Historical Society for safekeeping.

2020 hrs: Round Table Discussion

- Chuck advised that the Souhegan River Trail project has started to include the proposed path under the Chamberlin Bridge. He stated it would be nice to see the bridge honored better and suggested the Heritage Commission may propose something, such as flower hangers or historic lamp posts. Chip suggested something similar to the granite flower planters that Milford has, which is maintained by their Gardening Club.
- Larry advised that the Knights of Columbus Craft Fair took place on November 3-4. They manned the combination Heritage Commission and Historical Society table. Larry replaced the Tupperware container with our postcards with a more befitting wooden box. Five postcards were sold. Larry turned over \$5 cash for the sales and an invoice for \$45 for the box and table space.
- John L. advised that he was on site for the start of the Souhegan Trail Project. Merrimack TV shot video of the opening day of the project. John L. and Chuck located unusual and historic bricks with fingerprints on them at the base of the retaining walls. The bricks were used to protect wooden support structures from the torrents of the river. John L. also advised that they have an exorbitant amount of video for their To & Froe episode of the Chamberlin Bridge and the Milford Lovejoy Granite Quarry. The episode may be released around January.

2035 hrs: Meeting adjourned

Next Meeting: December 18, 2023