

North Reading Historical Commission

2008 Annual Report

The Commission was very active in 2008 in its efforts for the continued restoration and preservation of the Damon Tavern (1820) and the ca.1835 Rufus Porter murals located in the ballroom. Extensive time was spent researching venues that contain Rufus Porter murals to obtain information on how other organizations dealt with fire suppression systems, preservation issues and local fire codes. The Commission's goal is to resolve the fire suppression issue so that the public can once again enjoy the historic Rufus Porter murals in the Damon Tavern. Fire suppression issues have prevented visitors from viewing the 1830's Rufus Porter murals in the ballroom and the Commission is striving to resolve this.

The Commission also worked on restoring the second floor of the Tavern. The second floor is the museum space allocated for this historic building. In preparation for the opening of the museum, the dilapidated carpet in the upstairs Rufus Porter Ballroom was carefully removed and plans are being made to refinish the floor. Protective window treatments for the Ballroom were researched to replace the decaying curtains.

A punch list was created outlining the work needed in each museum area of the Tavern, through a series of phases, for continued restoration. Much work was accomplished by volunteers during two "historic properties work days" organized by the Commission. Volunteers came from the North Reading community, the North Reading Historical Commission, the North Reading Historical Society and the North Reading Town Band.

Work progressed in the entry hallway and staircase next to the Historical Society's Welcome Center on the first floor. This entryway leads to the second floor museum. Old wallpaper was carefully steamed and removed. Worn out carpet, carpet padding and tack strips were removed from the staircase, revealing lovely oak treads. Furniture was moved from the northwest upstairs room to make way for another phase of work. Volunteers also worked in the basement. Crumbling wallpaper was removed on the

second floor, peeling paint was scraped from windows and general trash and an old couch found their way to the curb.

The North Reading Historical and Antiquarian Society Board of Directors began meeting in their Research Room next to the Welcoming Center in the Damon Tavern in October.

The Commission centered efforts on the vision, use and continued preservation of the museum space and office space within the Damon Tavern. The Commission assisted the town and a local realtor with the downstairs office space lease with reviewing a possible new occupancy. NorCam, North Reading Cable Access & Media, discussed their potential leasing of the office space.

The Commission also assisted the Town of North Reading with a Preservation Restriction Agreement concerning the historic Jacob McIntire House & Shed located at 85 Park Street.

In conjunction with the North Reading Historical & Antiquarian Society and the Flint Memorial Library, the Commission sponsored a lecture by Public Archaeology Laboratory (PAL). Researchers gave a presentation about the archaeological investigations that were conducted prior to building the residences at Martins Brook and Edgewood Office Park at the site of the former J.T. Berry Rehabilitation Center. The Massachusetts Historical Commission possesses the ancient artifacts and our Commission is working toward obtaining them for a permanent public display.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Hayden - Chairman

Keith Young - Vice Chairman

Barbara Jagla - Secretary

Happy DiFranza

Pat Romeo

Ann Sullivan