

2002 Westford Historical Commission Annual Report

The Westford Historical Commission summarizes 2002 as a year of action.

Significant progress on two major initiatives during the year contributed to our success. First, Parkerville and Brookside Historic Districts were approved by the Massachusetts Historical Commission for listing on The National Register of Historic Places. Both nominations were forwarded to the National Park Service in Washington D.C. in December 2002 and should be listed in the first quarter of 2003. The Commission also submitted National Register nominations for the Fairview and West Cemeteries. The second major initiative was saving the original parsonage of the United Methodist Church on Church Street in Graniteville, which was successfully completed in August 2002 when the house was moved to its new address at 4 River Street. We also began working on a strategic plan to help us with our preservation efforts over the next five years.

The National Register of Historic Places

The year 2002 brought the Westford Historical Commission two additional historic districts, Brookside and Parkerville. Westford now has five historic districts Westford Center, Graniteville, Forge Village, Brookside and Parkerville with over 600 buildings and structures listed on the National Register. This is important to note because we now have the majority of the 689 buildings built prior to 1921 (the effective date of Westford's Demolition Delay Bylaw) listed on The National Register of Historic Places. The process has focused our attention over the past 7 years on documenting and photographing many of the historical buildings, residents, and villages of Westford.

Sanford Johnson, a preservation consultant, was hired by the Historical Commission to complete the nomination forms and assist us through the process of getting listed. Sanford documented the historical and architectural significance of each district. He also photographed the districts as required and submitted the photographs along with maps of the districts to The Massachusetts Historical Commission.

The Commission's next challenge was to get Westford's cemeteries listed on the National Register. We feel it is important to document our historic cemeteries and list them on the National Register because they hold the remains of those Westfordians who have participated in shaping the Town and United States history, including many veterans of our wars from the Colonial era onward. We find ourselves at the beginning of the 21st century, and documenting our predecessors deeds in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries becomes all the more important. The Commission submitted nominations to the Massachusetts Historical Commission in May for the Fairview and West cemeteries. In 2003 we will submit nominations for the Hillside, Wright and Russian cemeteries.

The Demolition Delay By-Law

The United Methodist Church's original parsonage on Church Street in Graniteville was moved to 4 River Street thanks to Pamela (Holmes) Whittlesey and her husband Roger. Pamela decided the Old Parsonage would be ideal on the lot adjacent to her home at 6 River Street. Her decision saved the parsonage from being demolished. As part of the church's recent capital expansion project, the church needed the space for parking and a playground and had been searching for a new home for the building for almost two years. After a series of meeting with various town boards, including the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Whittlesey's were given authorization to move the building with some deed restrictions that include maintaining the exterior of the house's character and architectural features.

On a sunny August 16th the building was moved on a truck very slowly down Broadway Street and on to River Street as the utility companies lowered the utility lines to make the move possible. It was an exciting day in Graniteville enjoyed by many spectators. The building was originally built in the 1870s and served as the home for the Methodist ministers and their families until 1961. The building was renovated by the Whittlesey's and occupied in November as a single family home. This is the first building saved since the inception of Westford's demolition delay by-law, and the Commission is pleased that this historic building is serving once again as a home in Graniteville.

The Commission has been working to save the Reid Barn located at 145 Littleton Road. The owners of the barn wanted to demolish it to create an office park. At the suggestion of Barbara Thornley, the Directors of the Middlesex 4-H Fairgrounds were approached about accepting the building, and they agreed. Paul MacMillan of the Middlesex County 4-H Fairgrounds Board of Directors has been coordinating the move for the 4-H. Finding an acceptable route has delayed the barn's move. It is our hope that it will be moved in the spring of 2003. Many people in the community want to see this structure saved because it is one of the few remaining barns still standing on Route 110 in Westford, and it will be put to good use by the 4-H.

The Commission also placed the old District No. 4 schoolhouse at 1 Lanes End, now a private home, under the demolition delay. Westford is fortunate to have all ten of its district schools, built circa 1870, in use as homes or, in the case of Parkerville School, as a working museum. It is our hope that we will be able to save this historic building.

Westford is in a "tear down" mode. In the year 2002, 13 houses were totally demolished to build new houses. While none of these houses were historically significant, the character of the community is irrevocably changed with each demolition.

The Historical Commission was pleased to be able to support the Roudenbush Community Center in their quest for Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds to preserve this historic building. We have also been working with the Town's GIS (Geographic Information Systems) manager to develop several historic overlay maps that will depict Westford's historic districts, other historic buildings, and possible sites of archeological interest. As part of our development of a strategic preservation plan we are preparing a detail inventory of Westford's history assets.

Scenic Roads

The Commission purchased signs to mark the ends of Westford's four scenic roads Old Road, Old Lowell Road, Vose Road, and Hildreth Street. We thank the Town Highway Department staff for helping us install these signs.

Membership

The Commission accepted the resignations of Marea Crocker Joncas and Deborahanne Mayer with regret. Marea was very helpful to the Commission as its secretary and in bringing thoughtful questions and concerns to the board. Deborahanne brought great energy and enthusiasm for historical preservation to the Commission, and we are pleased she continues her support of our town's history as a director of the Historical Society. Thank you for your service Marea and Deborahanne. The Commission welcomes Roberta McGuire of Chamberlain Road as a full member. Roberta brings a wealth of skills to the Commission including her organizational and planning abilities.

Members of the Commission supported several other town committees in 2002. Ken Tebbetts has been an active member of the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) and the School Naming Committee, where he urged the naming of one of Westford's new elementary schools after Rita

Miller, long-time Westford teacher and principal of Frost School. Stacey Perron has served on the Monuments Committee. Jane Hinckley and Bob Oliphant have served on the new Records and Archives Management Committee.

In Summary

The Westford Historical Commission has completed another productive year serving the Westford community's historic preservation efforts. We would like to thank all those persons who have helped us along the way; your support of our efforts is greatly appreciated. A special thank you to Pamela Hall who has volunteered her time to record our meetings and assist with other administrative details.

Sincerely,

Ken Tebbetts, Chairperson

Bob Oliphant, 1st Vice President

Jane Hinckley, 2nd Vice President

Deborahanne Mayer, Secretary

Sally Benedict, Treasurer

Roland Pendlebury

Stacey Perron

Phil Gilbert, Alternate

Roberta McGuire, Alternate

Pam Hall, Administrative Assistant