

The Salem Preservationist

Reporting historic preservation developments in the greater Salem area

"Looking backward and forward to a Greater Salem"

In Salem



Salem Preservation, Inc. files Organizational Papers in May

Papers were filed with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in Boston in late May of 2003 establishing **Salem Preservation, Inc.** as a new Salem based non profit preservation organization. Organizing officers were Rob Gray as President, John Goff as Vice President, Gary Wuertz as Secretary, and Barbara Wuertz as Treasurer.

President Rob Gray explained " A lot of groups across the U.S. celebrated Preservation Week in May with local preservation initiatives. We felt there was an acute community need and sufficient resources to start a new community preservation organization here in Salem. We decided to step forward and form Salem Preservation, Inc."

Vice President John Goff added "SPI is now chartered with the Commonwealth to function within the original bounds of the 1626 Naumkeag settlement. We therefore have legal authority to undertake a wide range of worthy projects alone, and with other communities in and around Salem, such as, Beverly, Marblehead, Peabody, Danvers, Wenham, and Manchester-By-The-Sea. These are most exciting times and we look forward to continued and sustained growth in the future."

Rob Gray adds "We are indebted to Barbara and Gary Wuertz for setting up the Salem Preservation website and the first issues of The Salem Preservationist. Much work remains to be done and we are excited to be developing a capacity to make improvements to better promote and utilize Salem as this nation's premiere heritage tourism center."

For more information and the latest news about SPI, you can access our website at:
www.salempreservation.org

Boston Street Urban Gateways Project underway

SPI's Vice President John Goff reports that the City of Salem's Boston Street Urban Gateways Task Force has been making great progress on a number of fronts since its organization in 2003. Under the capable leadership of Mary Usovicz and Tom Philbin, assistant to Mayor Stanley J. Usovicz, Jr., a broad coalition of experts, municipal department heads, and Salem residents has been assembled to improve blighted properties like Flynttan in "Blubber Hollow".



The Task Force is working to further the appropriate restoration of historic fences, sidewalks, and architectural landmarks like the 1906 Colonial Revival style AOH Hall on Boston Street, as well as to improve pedestrian safety.

Landscape architect Michael Blier has been a leading advocate of using the Flynttan property as a pocket park and neighborhood nursery with tree storage and wild flower plantings while other improvements are being coordinated.

The Task Force is to be applauded for working to eliminate specific environmental problems on this urban entrance corridor in Salem, while it pioneers methods and means which can be used to make similar improvements on other urban entrance corridors in Salem and the greater Salem area.

Congratulations to all the parties involved for illustrating the beauty and potential of Boston Street, Salem's chief connector with Peabody and other cities e.g. Boston and points south via Route 128.

Salem City Hall Celebrates Restoration

On Friday, May 30th, festivities were held at Salem City Hall celebrating the restoration of the Greek Revival style landmark at 93 Washington Street, and the dedication of the Shirley M. Cervoni Hallway. Mary Usovicz's Friends of City Hall recently completed a spectacular community renovation and restoration of architect Richard Bond's building, which resulted in the front door, front entrance hall, and stair hall and corridors being significantly refinished, and improved. Nearly 100 local businesses and individuals financed the work.



Mary Usovicz explained: "Salem has an outstanding collection of historic landmarks. If we're really serious about historic preservation, as the Friends are, and this Mayor's Administration is, then we have to start at home. Salem City Hall belongs to all the citizens of Salem, and my main reason in restoring the building was to instill a sense of pride."

Mary added "I also hoped to develop City Hall into a site which tourists could visit and enjoy. Towards that end, we brought back historic furnishings inside the building, and created a sign advertising its status as Second Oldest City Hall in the United States."

Restoration of the 1837 windows at Salem City Hall was a parallel project, which utilized State funds provided by the Massachusetts Preservation Project Fund (MPPF). Restoration Architect Staley McDermet of Salem managed the Salem City Hall windows restoration project. The Salem Preservationist thanks all its readers who contributed to the Friends of City Hall restoration, and encourages all now to view the handsome landmark. 2003 promises to be a good year to remember. As the red sign outside City Hall proclaims, here in Salem "Preservation Works!"

Naumkeag & Salem First Families Initiative Makes Salem Witch House Discovery



Here's an old house riddle for all readers of *The Salem Preservationist*:

Q: "When is a Witch House not a Witch House?"
A: "When it's a circa 1673 Officer's House from the King Philip's War."

That's right....new research conducted by SPI in 2003 has documented that Salem's ancient and esteemed "Witch House" on Essex Street was first designed, built, and mostly completed for Capt. Nathaniel Davenport of Salem long before the word "witch" was ever associated with the "Witch City".

Capt. Nathaniel Davenport was the son of Richard Davenport who allied with Gov. John Endicott in fighting the Pequot Indians of Connecticut in the 1630's. The Endicotts and Davenports are thought to have come to Salem together aboard the ship ABIGAIL which arrived in Salem in 1628, exactly 375 years ago this September.

The young Nathaniel Davenport was born here in Salem about 1630 and spent much of his youth in military training. He accompanied his father Richard Davenport when the elder Mr. Davenport was made keeper of "The Castle" on Castle Island which defended Boston Harbor against enemy attack in the 17th century. When the call finally came for new troops to preserve New England against Native American attacks and uprising in the 1670's, Capt. Nathaniel Davenport of Salem and Boston led the Massachusetts Regiment Fifth Company on a 50 mile march from Boston to Dedham to South Kingstown, Rhode Island. The trek was marched in December of 1675, just before Christmas.

Capt. Davenport and his men managed to crack the defenses of the heavily palisaded and armed Narragansett Indian fort. However, Capt. Davenport died of Indian wounds shortly after making entry to the fort. The action was later called The Great

Swamp Fight and it was the first major Colonial offensive in King Philip's War.

New England retained its English footing as a consequence of putting down the Native American uprising of the 1670's. Unfortunately, it lost many of its able leaders as a result.

Amidst the war chaos, Salem feared a more organized Native uprising against Davenport's town. They quickly erected their own palisade wall near current Boston Street to protect against attack. The precise location was later mapped by Sidney Perley and James Duncan Phillips in a 1933 map called "Part of Salem in 1700".

A new English owner came to purchase and complete the building of the unfinished Capt. Davenport house. His name was Judge Jonathan Corwin. That is how Salem's so-called Witch House became a local landmark and war memorial many years before 1692.

Salem Preservation, Inc. Launches "Naumkeag & Salem First Families" Initiative

SPI President Rob Gray and Vice President John Goff are currently working to craft a "Naumkeag & Salem First Families" Initiative to celebrate 2003 as the 375th Anniversary of the year Naumkeag was renamed Salem by the first English colonists in 1628.

This Initiative is designed to position Salem for additional festivities and commemorative events in 2005. Key components will most likely include:

1. New documentation and exploration of ancient Native American sites and history associated with early Naumkeag and Salem;
2. New exploration of Salem's "great migration" and family links with Old England;
3. Reviewing the potential for SALEM1630: Pioneer Village to be restored and improved;
4. Celebration of 2005 as the 375th Anniversary of Governor Winthrop's arrival in Salem, coinciding with the 75th Anniversary celebration of the building of SALEM 1630:Pioneer Village, and the 375th Anniversary celebration of other Winthrop developments including founding of Charlestown and the city of Boston.

***Salem:Place, Myth and Memory* On Track for Publication Early in 2004**

Professors Dane Morrison of the History Department and Nancy Schultz of the English Department at Salem State College are pleased to report that the

anthology Salem: Place Myth and Memory is scheduled to be published by Northeastern University Press early in 2004.

This book, with about a dozen Salem history collaborators, will examine the many urban identities Salem has possessed since its founding in 1626, identities such as Frontier Outpost, Gateway to the Far East, Architectural Mecca, Place of Religious Refuge, and Educational Center.

Salem: Place, Myth and Memory promises to greatly increase the number of people who learn about Salem (classroom use is anticipated) while also increasing the ways people "see" and experience Salem.

Demonstrating that the Editors comprehend the marketing power of historic anniversaries, this book will be released in 2004 to coincide with the 150th anniversary of Salem State College and the Bicentennial of Nathaniel Hawthorne's birth. Quotes by Hawthorne at the beginning of each chapter integrates it with Salem and the work of one its most famous 19th century authors.

National Park Service Proposes Rescue of Ancient Marblehead Warehouse

As reported in the last issue of The Salem Preservationist, the 18th century Tucker's Wharf building in Marblehead is actively endangered with demolition. To better assess the importance of the North Shore landmark, the Friends of Tucker's Wharf engaged noted historic building researcher Robert Booth to better document the history and evolution of the structure. Mr. Booth discovered the building was older and architecturally rarer than originally thought.

Mr. Booth's new findings prompted Steven Kesselman, Superintendent of the Salem Maritime National Historic Site, to propose a complete dismantling, re-erection and restoration of the circa 1770 timber framed warehouse on a "new" site at historic Derby Wharf in neighboring Salem. There it would help visitors understand the original use of Derby Wharf, support the FRIENDSHIP in its operations as a working tall ship interpreting the Great Age of Sail, while saving and recycling a cherished Colonial landmark.

The Salem Preservationist endorses the National Park Service proposal and notes that if the Marblehead landmark is saved and reconstructed on Derby Wharf, over 500,000 visitors each year will appreciate Marblehead's historic maritime links with Salem.

We all stand to gain when we work together to promote our region as a whole. The Salem Crescent

architectural tours has started the process by jointly promoting historic maritime sites in Salem, Marblehead, and Beverly a few years ago. As the old saying goes "a rising tide lifts all ships".

For further information on Friends of Tucker's Wharf, contact Mr. Peter Sorlien at peter@antiquesappraiser.us

Near Salem

Essex National Heritage Commission Holds Sixth Annual Community Forum on Massachusetts Historical Records

On May 9th, 2003, over 200 historians and preservationists convened at Merrimack College in North Andover to discuss "*Celebrating History: [Using] Anniversaries to Educate, Preserve, and Promote*".

The Sixth Annual Community Forum on Massachusetts Historical Records brought together a wide range of specialists who spoke directly to the core issues of using history and historic anniversaries to excite people, preserve resources, educate youth, and re-stimulate our local, regional and national economies.

SPI's John Goff spoke about the success of the Bowditch Initiative in celebrating 2002 as the Bowditch Bicentennial Year.

Many thanks to Annie Harris, Bill Steelman, and the whole crew of the Essex National Heritage Commission for making May 9th such a wonderful dayand a place where the seeds for many new historic anniversaries and historic projects were planted.

Coming soon: Due to the number of preservation news items, we have decided to defer reporting on the Community Preservation Act. Look for a full discussion of the Act and all its intricacies in a future issue.