

1717 MEETINGHOUSE FOUNDATION, INC.

THE 1717 MEETINGHOUSE NEWSLETTER

WINTER/SPRING EDITION



MARCH 2014

Historic 1717 Meetinghouse

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- George Newton

My name is George Newton and I write to you as the new President of the 1717 Meetinghouse Foundation, having succeeded Peter Smith in December 2013.

As you meet me for this first time, albeit remotely, please allow me a short introduction. My wife and I moved to Cape Cod almost five years ago. Yes, we are "wash ashores", but with some qualification: We are both natives of Massachusetts and we met many years ago in Chatham while holding down summer jobs. I am a retired Navy Captain, having spent 25 years serving in nuclear submarines, including command of an attack submarine.

Subsequent to my naval service, I became involved in Arctic research, and for fourteen-plus years I served under appointments by Presidents Bush (41) and Clinton as Chair of the US Arctic Research Commission, whose responsibility it is to recommend Arctic research policies and priorities to the President and Congress. I suspect you are thinking: "I hope he's enjoying all this cold and snow we are having this

winter" ...and the honest answer is that it is bothering me about as much as everyone else.

As most of you are aware, over a year ago the 1717 Meetinghouse Foundation was awarded a \$275,000 grant by the Town of Barnstable Community Preservation Committee to replace the roof (last done 30 years ago), repair the yoke of the Revere bell, install the first elements of a fire suppression system, and lastly, complete an engineering assessment of the building. We have just recently obtained all needed documents and verbal clearances to get started. Not surprisingly, on the day we were to obtain one of the final signatures, it snowed and the meeting was postponed by a week.

The commencement of these urgent maintenance items will be but a start on an intensive effort on the Meetinghouse, both inside and out. Our 2014 membership campaign has just started and we have been buoyed by a significant gift from the Lothrop Family Foundation. Additional fundraising

efforts are being put in place and a long-term development plan is in preparation.

The Board of Trustees is committed to maintaining, not only the physical building, but restoring the building's use to a more prominent place in the local community. Later this spring we plan to host a series of public debates on local, state and national issues, just as our forbearers did in colonial times. Look for the initial announcement in the Cape Cod media in the near future, and then plan to attend, experiencing the atmosphere of the Meetinghouse as a truly public forum.

We on the Board are committed to our current course of action. We want the 1717 Meetinghouse, which is the oldest standing public building on Cape Cod, to be among the finest representations of our Nation's colonial history.

I thank you for your interest in the 1717 Meetinghouse and for supporting the 1717 Meetinghouse Foundation.

THE FUTURE OF THE CAPE COD COMMISSION

A Debate at the Historic 1717 Meetinghouse

Friday, March 28, 2014
7:00 p.m. — 8:00 p.m.

Admission is FREE.
Refreshments and more conversation
follow the debate.

Debaters will be Harwich Selectman Ed McManus
and Bourne Selectwoman Linda Zuern.

The first in a series of spirited debates hosted in the very building where notables the likes of James Otis, Jr., Mercy Otis Warren, Captain "Mad Jack" Percival & Chief Justice Lemuel Shaw enjoyed the challenge of getting a particular point across to those who would listen.



ACTIVITY FROM THE LONG RANGE PLANNING TEAM

—*Georgia Lonkart*

The tarp on the 1717 Meetinghouse roof is not what is meant by “going green.” Alas, the Foundation has yet to receive the funding that will enable the installation of a new roof and the removal of the green tarp. As of this writing the green tarp, although a year covering the roof, holds on, waiting for the day when it will be replaced. Recently there has been some important movement forward in obtaining at least a portion of the funding, giving high hopes to the possibility that this Spring will see a new roof and no longer will the roof of the Meetinghouse be “going green.”

While the green tarp is a visible sign of the need for a new roof, other needs are not as visible, but are just as pressing. The Revere bell housing is in need of repair or replacement and we must understand the fire prevention needs, and take steps to protect the Meetinghouse from such a disaster. And most importantly we need to have the entire building evaluated to determine what other preservation efforts will be required.

A year ago this February the Town Council approved Community Preservation funding to be put towards an architectural evaluation of the building, a replacement roof, the bell housing repair/replacement, and the first phase of a fire suppression system. A key condition for this funding is an historic restriction agreement with the Town of Barnstable and the Massachusetts Historic Commission (MHC). Normally, these designations are a ninety day process or less. However, in order to agree to this historic restriction the Massachusetts Historic Commission requires a deed as proof of ownership. Meeting this requirement turned out to be a year in process rather than the normal ninety days.



The green tarp roof has been “temporary” protection for far too long.

As it was discovered, the Meetinghouse is so old as to not have a deed to the land on which it sits. There are many references to the Meetinghouse in the deeds to abutting properties in the almost 300 years since it was built, but no deed to the land could be found. This could be for many reasons, not the least of which, was the fire in Barnstable that burned the Registry of Deeds in the 1800’s. Only a handful of deeds survived that fire. Without the benefit of copy machines many properties were left “deedless.”

Lacking a deed, an alternative solution had to be found. All the documentation and maps from the taking of land for the building of Route 149, the widening of Cedar Street, the discontinuance of Crooked Cartway for the building of Route 6, and the deeds of other adjacent properties were researched to compile a picture which shows the location of the Meetinghouse in West Barnstable. In addition, the town meeting minutes from the early 1700’s were reviewed to find references to the building of the Meetinghouse in West Barnstable. Until the separation of church and state in Massachusetts in 1833, buildings such as the Meetinghouse were maintained as public buildings. So, after much discussion and compiling of proof, it was finally determined, that if a “release deed” could be given by the Town of Barnstable to the West Parish of Barnstable, then the MHC requirements for the restriction would be met.

On February 6, 2014 the Town Council of Barnstable voted to issue such a deed to the West Parish of Barnstable. This has since been submitted to MHC who has indicated that this will be satisfactory for their purposes.

So, after over two years of grant application, approvals, and deed research, the Meetinghouse will finally get its statement of health, defining future preservation needs, from an qualified historic architect; as well as a new roof, a secure Revere bell, and at minimum, a plan to move forward on fire suppression.

It looks like the only green we will see this Spring is the grass on the lawn and the teardrop at the Meetinghouse.

Remember: *The 1717 Meetinghouse is open for self-guided tours each summer, everyday from 9am to 4pm, Memorial Day thru Columbus Day.*

TO MAINTAIN OR TO PRESERVE

—*The Building & Grounds Committee*

Elizabeth Crocker Jenkins and her team of dedicated Meetinghouse friends spearheaded the campaign to restore the building from the Greek revival style of the late 1800's to its original 1717 structure, completing the enormous effort in 1956. Since that time, the 1717 Meetinghouse Foundation (formerly known as the West Parish Memorial Foundation) has been charged with maintaining the building and its grounds.

A couple of years ago, the Board of Trustees discussed the difference between “maintaining” and “preserving”. That conversation led to many questions that we felt unqualified to answer. Obviously, roof replacement, attention to the Revere bell, as well as fire detection and/or suppression were on top of the list. However, there is so much more to consider if we are to be good stewards of this amazing Meetinghouse.

We agreed that we would enlist the help of a preservation architect. A proposal went out to several firms and the decision was made to hire J.M. Booth & Associates, Inc. from New Bedford, Massachusetts.

What we outlined in the Request for Proposal is as follows:

- Description of systems including life expectancies and concerns
- Description of condition of interior structure to also include floor, pews, walls, windows, and any other permanent interior structure
- Description of condition of bell tower and recommendations for repair and preservation
- Description of exterior condition and recommendations for repair and preservation
- Detailed report on potential code violations
- Prioritized recommendations for preservation of the building and its systems with cost estimates

Joe Booth was selected not only for his extensive background, his understanding of the scope of the project, his willingness to take on this responsibility for life and especially for his passion regarding preservation. We will be welcoming him as soon as the funds from the CPC are released (any day now!)

The green tarp protecting the roof of the Meetinghouse is now into its second tough year and we are looking forward to finally being able to contract for its replacement.

After that? What's next?

Truly,

The Building & Grounds Committee:

Fred Clausen, Wolfgang Fattler, Bill Mullin, Bob Wastrom, Donna Grohe

Annual and Life memberships, renewals and supplementary donations are gratefully accepted at any time throughout the year as you are able.



Your gifts can also be made *in honor of* or *in memory of* a loved one.

Visit the Foundation's updated website for details on upcoming events, updates on building restoration efforts & information on Foundation activities. You can also read some of our correspondence that highlights the what, why and how Trustees are accomplishing our goals.



1717 MEETINGHOUSE
FOUNDATION, INC.

2049 Meetinghouse Way
Post Office Box 781
West Barnstable, MA 02668

Phone: 508-362-8624
www.1717meetinghouse.org

PRESERVING THE WEST PARISH MEETINGHOUSE AS
A MEMORIAL TO EARLY AMERICA AND AMERICANS

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DID YOU KNOW?

- Construction on the Meetinghouse began in 1717 and was completed in time for the first worship service held on Thanksgiving Day, 1719.
- The half-ton bell was cast by Paul Revere for the Town of Barnstable in 1806. It was given to the church in memory of Colonel James Otis, father of the Patriot.
- Rev. Henry Goodhue, Pastor of West Parish Church from 1863-1883 established a high school in the upstairs vestry. This was the first high school in the Town of Barnstable.

MEMBERSHIP FORM — Enclose check payable to:
1717 Meetinghouse Foundation, Inc.

The Foundation is an historic preservation group, a 501(c)3 organization separate and apart from West Parish of Barnstable, and maintains the historic 1717 Meetinghouse. You do not need to be a member of the West Parish Church to be involved (although many are.) The only requirement is an appreciation of the valuable history of this building and want to see it preserved for future generations.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City/State/ZIP _____

Email _____

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Annual Membership \$ 25.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life, — Bell Ringer (\$750-\$999) \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family Annual Membership \$ 50.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Life, — Tower Climber (\$1000-\$4999) \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend—Annual Donation, \$51-\$749 \$ _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Life, — Silver Keeper (\$5000-\$9999) \$ _____ |

All Gifts are tax deductible. Life Membership may be budgeted over three years.



Elizabeth Crocker Jenkins
(ca. 1922)

"The Woman Who Saved Our Meetinghouse" [1874-1956]