

2015 Annual Report – Lancaster Historical Commission

The members were: Michael Sczerzen, Chair, Heather Lennon, Vice Chair, Joy Peach, Sally Rouleau, Karen Silverthorn, Mark Schryver, and Jean Watson. Associate Members: Joan Richards and Garrett Sheahan.

In May, LHC member Sally Rouleau moved out of state and was thanked for her years of service at the Annual Town Meeting. On June 1, 2015 the Board of Selectmen appointed Garrett Sheahan to full membership.

The Commission members thank the following persons who have adopted a historic marker in town and taken responsibility for the area surrounding the markers:

- Jean and James Watson - Lover's Lane/ Old Elm Tree Marker on Centerbridge Road
- Liz and Tom Colley - South Lancaster Ward Park water trough
- Cemetery Dept. – North Village Water Trough
- Michael Sczerzen and Joan Richards - Lane's Crossing Water Trough at the intersection of Harvard Rd., Neck Rd. and Route 117 (Seven Bridge Rd.)
- Alexandra Turner – Henry Chase Water Trough at the intersection of Centerbridge Road, Neck Road, and Main Street

Anyone interested in adopting a marker, please contact the Historical Commission by e-mailing to LancasterHistoricalCommission@yahoo.com or contact us at 978 365-3326 extension 1057. Thank you to Sue Billings and Corinne Walker of the Lancaster Garden Club for coordinating other areas in town. The Historical Commission encourages all town agencies to maintain plantings with appropriate landscape material that enhance the historical buildings around the Town Green.

On February 4, 2015 the LHC office was relocated to 131 Main Street (in the Hometown Bank Plaza, rear lower level). Half of the collection is stored in another building on Plain Street in Clinton. The office hours are most Tuesdays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Special appointments can be scheduled for interested individuals wishing to do on-site research. Many items pertaining to Lancaster are for sale.

Vice-Chairperson Heather Lennon, who also serves as the volunteer office coordinator, continues to be actively involved in the organizing, preparing and archiving of historical materials pertaining to our collections. She met with a representative of SHRAB (State Historical Records Advisory Board) in the summer. An informative report followed indicating that the town's historical archives are well organized and work continues. In addition to volunteer staff there are two senior abatement workers in the office. In total, no less than 2,515 volunteer hours have been recorded in the office in 2015, plus time spent by members who personally greeted and toured visitors from various parts of the United States to areas of historical interest. We had no less than 37 inquiries that were answered relating to Lancaster History during the time the office was open.

The Commission co-sponsors some of the yearly four programs of the Lancaster Historical Society. For example, in the coming year a program is planned with the First Church of Christ Lancaster as they celebrate the 200th Anniversary of their church building.

In 2015, the Historical Commission supported efforts regarding:

- **Prescott Building** -- The Historical Commission has worked diligently to move this project forward drive forward this project since 2010. This year with the change in town officials and administrative staff, delays have continued and the project has been delayed. After meeting with Ryan McNutt, Town Administrator, and members of the Board of Selectmen, Spencer –Vogt were selected as the architects to complete the design phase. The cost estimates are being pursued. After these are completed, the LHC wants to meet with the team to discuss what impact increases will have on the completion of the project as originally approved.

- **Bartlett Pond Conservation Area and Frommer Park** –Some of the text on the signs relating to the history of the area was provided by the Historical Commission. The signs were installed in 2015 and citizens are enjoying the area.
- **Old Common Road** – We continue to seek answers to numerous concerns related to the c.1799 houses that are falling into disrepair under the stewardship of the DCAMM (Department of Asset Management & Maintenance) at the State and the Robert Kennedy Action Corp.
- **Freedom's Way** --We were actively involved in the Freedom's Way project, "Hidden Treasures". We highlighted Rowlandson Rock. Heather Lennon prepared a Power Point presentation and lecture followed by visits to the "Rock". Michael Sczerzen, Heather Lennon and Tim Castner lead tours. Tim Castner of the Trails Committee partnered with the Historical Commission in this two-day event.

Changes in Town:

- **Lancaster Bank** –The Center Hose House, was purchased by Woods Ambulance Company
- **Ponakin Bridge and Atherton** – The Commission is seeking to have these rare "pony-truss bridges incorporated as pedestrian bridges into a future proposed trails system available to the townspeople.
- **Rowlandson Rock** -- We are still waiting finalization of the plan to formally recognize the land donation and signage presently erected on the site from the Kilbourn family. The painting of one of the town's water towers has delayed the dedication. Still pending is a permanent easement from an abutter to access the rock.
- **227 Harvard Road – The Charles Wyman House c. 1840 -- recently** owned by Richard Hart -- had fallen into disrepair. An agreement was made by Mr. Hart and the Lancaster Fire Department to raze the house by burning it as a training exercise. This exercise was conducted on May 2 and 3, 2015.
- **A proposal from the Montachusett Development and Planning** to change the zoning of the Central Village District was soundly opposed during a public hearing. The Planning Board voted to not move forward with this proposal. The LHC sent letters opposing the proposal from the start.

Accessions: 2015

The Commission received donations from:

Orlando Pacheco – Commemorative Plate

Jean Russo – Postcards and Current Topics Booklets relating to Lancaster and Clinton

Mary & Leo Paquette – Mounted metal flag holder from the Civil War era

Ann & John Fuller -- Three 1953 Souvenir pewter porringers and a 1922 Lancaster High School yearbook

Philip Gates & Norman Prentiss -- Metal Lancaster firefighter's badge

Anne McLaughlin – Three (3) Lancaster postcards, one (1) Lancaster made wood box with leather strand "hinges"

Molly McLaughlin –Civil War era lady's dress (reproduction) made by her mother, Nancy Young.

Jean Lidstone – Copy of Joy Peach's Booklet on African Americans, copy of Bill Farnsworth's Historical Markers List, and one set of cardboard mounted black and white photographs of Lancaster

A detailed listing of the donations and acquisitions can be obtained at the Historical Commission Office.