

## 2014 Annual Report – Lancaster Historical Commission

The members were: Michael Sczerzen, Chair, Heather Maurer Lennon Vice Chair, Joy Peach, Sally Rouleau, Karen Silverthorn, Mark Schryver, and Jean Watson and Associate Members: Joan Richards and Garrett Sheahan. Catherine Chaisson, Associate Member, term expired in June 2014.

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 on Centerbridge Road
- Liz and Tom Colley - Ward Park water trough
- Cemetery Dept. - Water trough at North Village
- Michael Sczerzen and Joan Richards - Lane's Crossing Water Trough
- Joanne Foster and Alexandra Turner - water trough at the intersection of Centerbridge Road, Neck Road, and Main Street

Anyone interested in adopting a marker, please contact the Historical Commission at [LancasterHistoricalCommission@yahoo.com](mailto:LancasterHistoricalCommission@yahoo.com) and telephone number 978-365-3909. 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.

The Commission office in 2014 was located at 94 Main Street (the Philbin Building). As of February 5, 2015, the office will be temporarily located at 131 Main Street (Hometown Bank Building).

Michael Sczerzen, Chairperson, and Heather Lennon, Vice Chairperson, have coordinated with Town Administrator Ryan McNutt on this relocation. 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 Lancaster. We have volunteer staff and two senior abatement workers. In total, no less than 2471 volunteer hours have been recorded in the office in 2014, plus time spent by members who personally greet visitors who came from California, Texas, Washington, Ohio, Oregon, and local New England states. We also had queries related to Lancaster's history.

The Historical Commission continues to answer requests for genealogical and other town related research. The office is open 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. The Commission co-sponsors some of the yearly four programs of the Lancaster Historical Society.

In 2014, the Historical Commission supported the efforts regarding:

- **Prescott Building** -- The Historical Commission successfully brought to the attention of our state representative, Harold Naughton, need for assistance in keeping this project moving forward. Special legislation (Bill H4331) was signed by Governor Patrick just before an October 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 deadline. This

was necessary to correct a series of paperwork errors relating to the town meeting warrant in 2013 and deadline for bond applications in 2012. Representative. Naughton also secured \$100,000 from the Massachusetts state budget to be used for the Prescott Building Rehabilitation Project. The project is now under the direction of the new Town Administrator, Ryan McNutt, who has hired an Owners Project Manager, who will select an applicant for the design phase of the project. We thank the townspeople of Lancaster for their support of this project.

- **Bartlett Pond Conservation Area and Frommer Park** --The Historical Commission participated in the dedication of the Bartlett Pond Conservation Area and Frommer Park on June 24, 2014. One of the two turbines was placed on a foundation base. Restoration work on the first turbine was completed in Worcester but it disappeared with no explanation after having been paid for by the town. Verbiage for signs relating to the history of the area was provided by the Historical Commission but due to production delays, they will not be installed until 2015.
- **Old Common Road** – We have had numerous concerns related to the c. 1799 houses that are falling into disrepair under the stewardship of the State and the Robert Kennedy Action Corp.. We have been in communication with Representative Naughton's office and the state maintenance group to voice our concern and that of the residents who live within the neighborhood.
- **Freedom's Way** --We were actively involved in the Freedom's Way project, "Paths of the Patriots". Heather Lennon and Joy Peach were involved. An ensemble performance of a play put together by Jim Moran of the American Antiquarian Society was presented in the Old Shirley Meetinghouse on October 19, 2015. Joy Peach portrayed Lancaster patriot Dr. William Dunsmore.

### Changes in Town:

- **Lancaster Bank** --The Center Hose House, which was formerly the Lancaster Bank and in more recent times housed the Ambulance Vehicle, has been put up for sale.
- **Ponakin Bridge** – Mr. Nels Raynor from Bach Steel of Holt, Michigan, an expert in historic bridges, has expressed interest in our historic Ponakin Bridge. This bridge and the Atherton Bridge over the Nashua in Lancaster are extremely rare examples of early "pony-truss" bridge construction. We hope that these bridges will be rehabilitated in the near future.
- **Rowlandson Rock** -- The historic Rowlandson Rock located at the top of George Hill has been donated to the town and accepted by the Board of Selectmen to be deeded to the Conservation Commission for preservation. This land was owned by the late William Kilbourn of Lancaster and was originally left to the Trustees of Reservations who declined the gift. Bill's heirs then agreed to deed the property to the Town of Lancaster. The

Lancaster Historical Commission plans to showcase this nationally significant site in partnership the Freedom's Way Heritage Association in 2015.

- **28-30 Harvard Road** -- The Stedman Nourse House (circa 1840), which had fallen into serious disrepair, was demolished to make way for a new duplex.

### **Accessions: 2014**

The Commission received donations from: Marilyn Chambers, Robin Davidson , George and Walter Fifield , Dorothea Germain, John Schumacher Hardy, Nat and Betty Hawkins, Lowell Joerg , David Kilbourn, Heather Lennon, Mary McNamara, Leo and Mary Paquette, Michael Sczerzen, Garrett Sheahan, Candy Shively, and, Jean Watson. A complete listing of the donations and acquisitions can be obtained at the Historical Commission Office.