

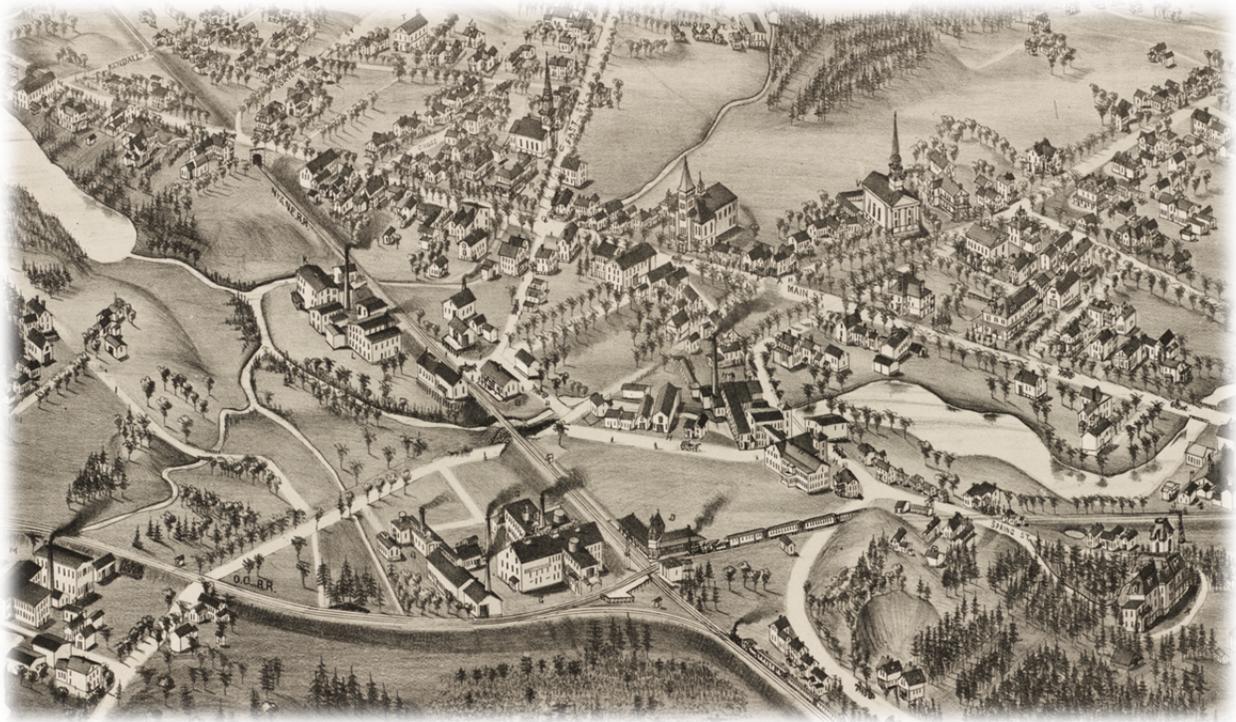
WALPOLE HISTORICAL COMMISSION



Walpole Town Hall
135 School Street, Walpole, Massachusetts 02081
<http://www.walpole-ma.gov/walpole-historical-commission>

ANNUAL REPORT

2013



Michael Amaral, Chairman
Emily Conrad, Secretary

Jacqueline Huckle
Samuel Obar
Patricia Travers
Roger Turner

Historical Commission

The Walpole Historical Commission (WHC), established by the Board of Selectmen in 1970 under the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Chapter 40, Section 8D, is the official advocate for the preservation, protection and development of the Town of Walpole's historical and archaeological assets. These assets include the actual history of the town and the actions of its inhabitants.

The Commission meetings are held as frequently as necessary but not less than six times annually. Meeting times and dates may vary, but generally take place on the 3rd Thursday of the month. They will be posted 48 hours in advanced on the bulletin board at the Town Hall, as well as on the Walpole Historical Commission web page. The meetings are open to the public. Most of the meetings in 2013 have been held at the new Walpole Room at the Walpole Public Library. At times the meetings may be held elsewhere.

In 2013, the commission had 7 regular meetings which took place on 17 January, 25 April, 16 May, 20 June, 19 September, 17 October and 21 November.

One special meeting was held to review a demolition request of a property older than 100 years old, as forwarded to us by Building Commissioner Jack Mee, located at 564 Main Street.

All our meetings were well attended, resulting in quorums.

As of this writing, Mr. Mark Almeda is to be sworn-in as an associate member of the Commission. Mr. Almeda, a local architect, member of the Walpole Historical Society and former town committee member, brings professional experience dealing with architectural historic preservation to the Commission.

The Chairman is also a member of the Walpole Master Plan Implementation Committee, and has participated in a majority of the MPIC meetings which took place in 2013.

Progress: Civil War Sesquicentennial

The Commission is currently collaborating with members of the Walpole & Norfolk Historical Societies on publishing a booklet honoring Walpole men who served in the United States Army & Navy during the War of the Rebellion 1861-1865. Much progress has been made on the research for this book over the past year.

Mr. Charles Hardy & his colleagues at the Walpole Historical Commission and Ms. Barbara Bartholemew of the Norfolk Historical Commission have amassed a significant amount of data on these men, culled from local publications and records as well as pension and service records received from the National Archives in Washington, DC.

The Historical Commission Chairman made a new connection with descendants of 1st Lt. James W. Bacon of Walpole, Mass., who first served in the Massachusetts 23rd Regiment, Company K, with several other Walpole men. That regiment took part in the victorious battles against enemy Rebel forces at Roanoke Island and Newbern, North Carolina.



After the liberation of those places by United States forces, thousands of former slaves entered Union lines looking for protection. The Union Army began to form military units designated “U.S. Colored Troops” led by white officers, many from Massachusetts including Lt. Bacon, who entered into the 36th Regiment, U.S. Colored Troops.

Regimental histories show that the regiment was one of the first to enter Richmond, Virginia, the Rebel capital, after the signing of the surrender at Appomattox by defeated General Lee. Lt. Bacon was threatened by the Rebel government with death if captured while leading African-American troops. Lt. James W. Bacon of Walpole, Mass. is listed on the African-American Civil War Memorial in Washington, DC.

This type of collaboration fulfills the sections of our Town Master Plan regarding the enhancement of public awareness of our local history, especially during this on-going Civil War sesquicentennial. The Commission will also be considering collaborative efforts with the local school systems during the coming year.

Dr. Silas E. Stone Room, Walpole Public Library

The Commission was involved with the re-naming of the Silas E. Stone Room at the Walpole Public Library. A memorial plaque dedicated to Dr. Stone was made and presented to Library Board members and is currently hanging in the room. This re-naming process took a room that was named after a building and successfully brought to life the history of the man that building was named for, all the while honoring a local Civil War veteran. Again actions such as this are fully in keeping with that of the Walpole Master Plan’s section on enhancing awareness of local history.



IN MEMORIAM
DOCTOR SILAS EMLYN STONE
B. AUGUST 10, 1838. D. JANUARY 29, 1887

Union Station, Walpole – National Register of Historic Places Application

The Commission also spent time working on exploring the possibilities of having the Blackburn Hall & the Union Station (MBTA station) in Walpole nominated for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of the Nation’s historic places worthy of preservation. Authorized by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Park Service’s National Register of Historic Places is part of a national program to coordinate and support public and private efforts to identify, evaluate and protect America’s historic and archeological resources. Local administration of this program is via the Massachusetts Historical Commission.



After consulting with a professional historical preservationist, we have learned that Blackburn Hall may be more problematic to list on the National Register due to its inclusion in the Municipal Campus of the town center. Union Station, on the other hand, is a much better candidate.

A request was made for a proposal to be presented to the Commission outlining how application for National Register of Historic Places status for Union Station would take place, and how much it would cost.

That proposal was received in mid-fall of 2013. The MBTA was approached regarding funding the costs of this application, but was unable to make the commitment due to the very large inventory of buildings, subway stations and structures under its control which are also eligible for national register status. The MBTA did, however, do extensive maintenance of Union Station this summer, spending significant funds for roof replacement, soffit & trim repair, full paint & new electrical fixtures. This alone expressed the MBTA's commitment to preserving their properties. The Commission chairman was consulted during this process.

Andrew Brennan, Director of Environmental Affairs for the MBTA, assured the Historical Commission Chairman in a late November 2013 e-mail that the MBTA is very enthusiastic about National Register Listing for Union Station Walpole, saying that it is a *"beautiful historic resource and one that we are very proud of and eager to protect.."* and *"We would be eager to work with local partners such as your organization to see if any other type of funding could be available to file a NR application. At this point, however, we do not have a funding source for this work."*

A local financial institution (Rockland Federal Credit Union) was approached and asked for financial help by the Chairman and its Board of Directors has most graciously agreed to fully fund the process.

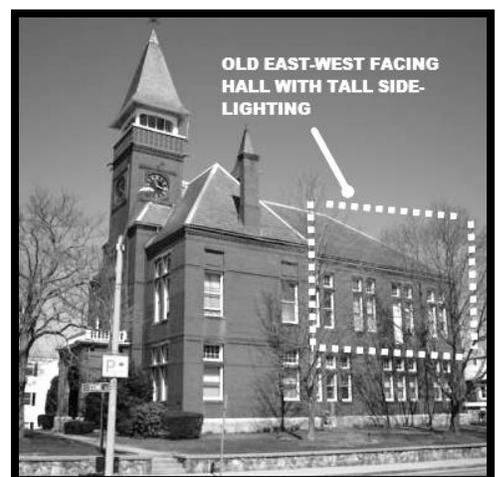
Union Station, Walpole, constructed in 1883 and one of the oldest wooden train stations in continuous use in the Nation, is a prime candidate for this listing, and would join Walpole's other historic structures listed on the National Register: The Old Town Hall (1881), and the Deacon Willard Lewis House (1825).

A listing on the National Register of Historic Places does not place any undue burdens on property owners, and in fact, makes these properties eligible for various types of grants for preservation. According to a town-wide survey of historic properties in Walpole made in 2008, there are numerous other candidate properties in Walpole that could be considered for National Register status. Please contact the Commission if you are interested in finding out if your property meets criteria for listing on the National Register.

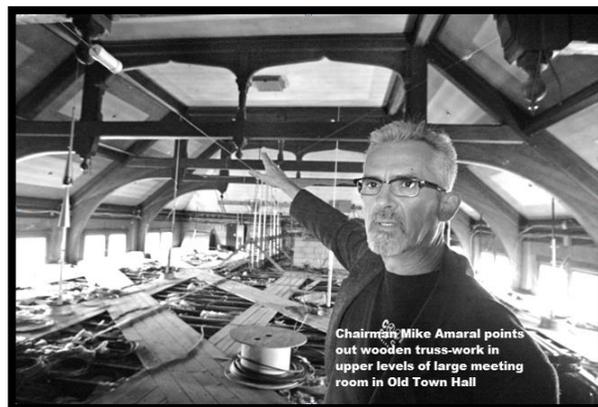
Old Town Hall, Walpole Center

The Historical Commission is still the local advocate for our Old Town Hall, currently in use as the Walpole Police Station. This building, constructed in 1881 and a true expression of the Post-Civil War prosperity in the town of Walpole still houses the town's Civil War Memorial.

Since long-range plans are being made for a new Police Station, the town must also keep in mind the future use and preservation of this municipal property, also listed on the National Parks Service's National Register.



Most locals are unaware of the fact that the Old Town Hall once had a full-sized function hall, complete with a small stage and a balcony for spectators. To get a sense of what that hall was like, one needs only to view the “attic” in the Old Town Hall and then go inside the Blackburn Hall, which is similarly oriented. The views out the windows on the North & South sides of both buildings are nearly identical due to the proximity & orientation of each building to the other.



Pictured is an interior shot of what is now considered an “attic” but was originally the top-half of a 28 foot high room with exposed functional wooden trusses. Many years ago the town divided this large room into an upper and lower level to create offices and attic storage space. The image of the upper level shows the tops of the tall side windows (near floor level) shown in the outside view.

Both the Old Town Hall and Blackburn Hall are oriented East-West (like most churches) and their tall side windows provided ample daylight for activities.

It is expected that when the building is empty, the town will consider restoring this old hall, home of Walpole’s only Civil War Memorial, to its original magnificence. It could once again be a place of public meeting for any town-related event. The Walpole Historical Commission anticipates close involvement with this process.

Final Comments

If we could only share more of the intimate details of what some of us involved with local history have learned: not just about local architectural history, but about real down-to-earth American History just from investigating the people of this town, wouldn’t that be a grand thing for everyone? It’s not all about buildings, bridges, houses or cemeteries: The Walpole Historical Commission also sees all of its assets, those that are tangible and intangible, as one beautiful thing that requires promotion and preservation.

Walpole does indeed have an utterly fantastic connection to the people that helped form the wonderful peaceful American life we live today. We urge all locals to embrace our local history: it’s All-American to the core.