

Westport Island History Committee

May 6, 2021 at the History Center

Present: Jeff Tarbox, Mary Ellen Barnes, Dedee Greenleaf-Hodgdon, Jean Wilhelmsen-Exter, Anne Cole-Fairfield, Connie Ostis, Joan Mason-Bradford and Gaye Wagner

Guest: Rich Lorensen

The meeting convened at 4:07 p.m. at the History Center. Anne moved to approve the minutes; Mary Ellen, 2nd; unanimously approved.

Westport Community Church Preservation Committee: The meeting opened with a presentation by Rich Lorensen regarding the creation of a Preservation Committee to manage the preservation and continuing upkeep of the Westport Community Church. Significant structural and maintenance issues have prompted an examination of what is needed to preserve this historic structure and to look at funding mechanisms to do so. An initial strategy has been explored to purchase additional land on the north and east sides to allow moving the church back from the road – to help eliminate road damage from snowplowing and deicing products, and to improve entry/exit safety. However, the committee found that land purchase was not an option. The group is now looking at a Preservation Plan B. Structural/maintenance issues include:

- A granite foundation which is not weathertight and is subject to mold and rot, and there is no cellar floor;
- The windows are sash style exposed to weather with no outside storm windows to protect them. They need to be rebuilt. When David Besecker repainted the church last year, he couldn't even putty the glazing because of poor condition.
- There is some roof planking breaking under the load which had been repaired in the past because of varmint damage.
- The church is only four feet from the road – in 1864 not a problem – today, this has traffic safety concerns and the clearing of road snow and ice cause yearly damage;
- The heating system is inefficient and causing stresses to the building.

The Preservation Committee reports to the WCA Board of Directors and includes members of the WCA, the History Committee, the Planning Board, and welcomes others. Repairs being considered:

- Weatherproofing;
- Concrete floor;
- Restoring roof structural integrity;
- Putting new boards and plastic trim on the front to help ground-level siding withstand the elements;
- Designing a new side entrance consistent with the existing front entrance architecture and the vestibule connecting the entrance doors. The new door would also provide access to a ramp for ADA compliance;
- Window rebuild; and
- Heat pump heating/cooling system for all-year temperature control.

It was noted that the building is on the National Historic Register, so renovations will be subject to certain requirements, including paperwork, in order to retain the historic value while protecting the structure.

Next steps: Need to speak with contractors for estimates and develop a plan. Going forward, the group will need town-wide involvement – especially from the History Committee. Needs will include: bookkeeping, grant writing, fundraising campaign assistance, etc. Jeff emphasized the importance of the History Committee taking a role given our preservation mission. Appreciation was expressed to Rich for the presentation.

Friends vs History Committee Financial Responsibilities: There was little new thinking in response to the survey Jeff sent out. The members agreed that expenses for

- improving or repairing house infrastructure should be the responsibility of the Town; and

- expenses for services, equipment, and materials specific to collection preservation, exhibit creation, and dissemination of Westport Island History, are the responsibility of the Friends/History Committee.

The Committee further agreed that we would continue to seek a \$500 appropriation from the Town to support maintenance of the Town historical collection for such costs as: annual Catalogit subscription, software, and for archival services and supplies. After discussion, Mary Ellen made a motion to request \$500 for the History Committee to support services and supplies to preserve the collection; Jean, 2nd, unanimously approved.

Ownership of History Books: Jeff proposed transferring ownership rights/proceeds re his mother's book, "Westport Island Maine 1605----1972", and Althea Cromwell's "Wiscasset Schooners" from the History Committee to the Friends. Mary Ellen made a motion to transfer ownership as stated; Dedee, 2nd; unanimously approved. Future reprints will now be the responsibility of the Friends. Dennis will be asked about similarly making the proceeds beneficiary for the "Mills" publication the Friends, rather than the History Committee.

Nominating Committee: Jeff asked for volunteers for a Nominating Committee – he, Connie and Anne will serve and will be in touch with members to verify their appointments and willingness to serve as officers.

Catalogit: Jean reported that Gaye has entered all of the accessions to date in Catalogit – and 215 items have been entered in the program. She has conducted training sessions with Sandy & Ann Springhorn. After entering a section of the cataloging work sheets completed by Jeff and volunteers, she noted questions about the level of detail we want to enter, missing information on boxes regarding accession and contents, what we want to do about photocopies as "holdings", whether we use high- or low-resolution scans, etc. The work is slow but progressing. Jeff noted the price of Catalogit will increase next year, but we will get additional individual accounts and storage. Many issues will be resolved as we proceed; Jean and Gaye will make recommendations and continue to develop training materials.

New Acquisitions: On Sunday, Jean and Jerry Burkhardt from Lisbon Falls donated a chest of items from the estate of Donald E. Knight (1924-2013). The couple reported that Knight was born on Westport and moved to Camden as a teenager. The materials need sorting to isolate Westport information; Knight made the chest that contains the materials.

Gaye and Cheryl Anderson are also sorting some Town Records previously not accounted for that include Civil War official orders; school records; indentures; and town financial records. At some point, we may want to consider asking the Selectmen's approval to consolidate all archival school records at the History Center.

Oral Histories: Connie reported she and Dedee are prepared to start oral histories. Helen Dunton has declined. Others under consideration are: Calvin Cromwell, Eben Greenleaf, and Amos "Buddy" Greenleaf. More to follow.

Friends Event: Joan updated planning on the Scavenger Hunt. She has the frisbee "giveaways" for the event; more volunteers are needed. Jeff and Mary Ellen will make some calls. Jean is developing the Friends Facebook page and will add another event promotion this week; she needs "likes" and "links" to expand the reach of the page. Flyers will be distributed locally. Suggestions: Big Al's; Ames Supply; etc.

Upcoming Meetings: Jeff proposed moving to joint History Committee/Friends meetings beginning in June – the 3rd Thursday of the month at 4 pm – for at least the summer to improve efficiency on issues that need to be considered by both groups and to be respectful of members' time. Jeff made a motion that the History Committee and Friends meet jointly going forward until decided differently, Jean, 2nd, unanimously approved.

Jeff made a motion to adjourn at 5:38 pm; Connie, 2nd; unanimously approved. The next Friends meeting will be Thursday, May 20, at 4 pm, mostly likely at the History Center. All are welcome. Next month's joint meeting will be Thursday, June 17, at 4 pm at the History Center.