



Mendon Historical Commission

Members: Wayne Wagner, Chairman Amy DeWitt, Vice Chair
Jane Lowell Ellen Wagner
Tony Willoughby, Recording Secretary

Meeting Date	April 17, 2012
Location	Mendon Records Room
Status	Approved, May 1, 2012

Present

Wayne Wagner, Amy DeWitt, Jane Lowell, Ellen Wagner, Tony Willoughby

7:09 Call to Order

Chairman Wagner called the meeting to order.

7:09 Review and Approve Previous Minutes

J. Lowell made a motion to approve the minutes of April 11, 2012 as amended. The motion was seconded by E. Wagner and passed unanimously.

7:15 Demolition Application: 31 Taft Avenue

J. Lowell reported that she and A. DeWitt examined the tax records of this property in Worcester. The earliest reference to a structure on this site is a "cottage owned by Emma Rich, 1930. The Commission discussed if the current house was one of the original cottages on Lake Nipmuc. The consensus was that it wasn't. At 7:30, T. Willoughby made the following motion:

I move that the Historic Commission declares the building located at 31 Taft Avenue is not historically significant as defined by the demolition delay by-law.

The motion was seconded by E. Wagner and passed unanimously. There was no further discussion.

Action Item ⇒ E. Wagner to deliver the signed demolition permit application to the Building Department.



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7:35 Demolition Application: 34 George Street

The Commission discussed the history of 34 George Street and the research that J. Lowell and A. DeWitt conducted. At 8:09 T. Willoughby made the following motion based on that research.

I move that the Historical Commission declare the house on 34 George Street is historically significant as defined by the demolition delay bylaw. The house meets three of the definitions stated in the bylaw.

1) Any building or structure, or portion thereof, within the Town which is in whole or in part seventy-five (75) or more years old or is of unknown age.

According to the National Register of Historic Places the house is 180 years old (built c. 1830)

3) The building or structure is associated with the life or lives of persons significant in the history of Mendon, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, or the United States;

Historically significant as a Gaskill family house, although an H or R Cook evidently lived at the address around the 1830s. (from National Historic Register narrative).

John Southwick Gaskill owned the property by mid-nineteenth century. Oldest child of Nahum Gaskill and Sally Southwick Gaskill. Grandson of Samuel Gaskill and Olive Cook Gaskill.

Cooks are direct descendants of Walter Cook, one of Mendon's founding fathers.

John Southwick Gaskill was a farmer who also served as Overseer of the Poor (late 1840s); Highway Commissioner (1860), Selectman (1853 and 1858 and 1863-68). On committee charged with buying a hearse for the town (1866). Also a representative to the General Court (1853-54) where he worked on amendments to the Massachusetts Constitution. Married to Harriet Staples.

Harriet Staples is direct descendant of Mendon founding father Abraham Staples. They had one surviving daughter, Julia Gaskill who married Arthur Viets Griswold Pond.

Arthur Viets Griswold Pond was a direct descendant of Seth Hastings and Chloe Davenport Hastings.

Seth Hastings was a very influential and prominent Mendon resident. He was a Harvard educated lawyer, large landowner, banker, Town treasurer (1794 and 1795), was elected one of the first School Commissioners (1796), was responsible with Philip Ammidon for laying out route of Hartford Pike from Hartford, CT through MA to the RI line (1796). Was a state representative elected as Federalist to 7th Congress (1801-07), member of MA Senate (1810 and 1814), Chief Justice of the Court of Sessions for Worcester County (1819-28). Seth and Chloe's daughter Mary Hastings married another prominent Mendon resident, Caleb Hayward.

Caleb Hayward was a lawyer, bank president, wealthy landowner and active Town official in 1820s: Collector and Constable, member of the committee to consider purchasing house and farm for support of the poor, member of the committee to redistrict school and highway districts, and Selectman. Caleb and Mary's daughter Chloe married Eli Pond, Jr.



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4) THE BUILDING OR STRUCTURE EMBODIES, EITHER BY ITSELF OR IN CONTEXT WITH A GROUP OF BUILDINGS OR STRUCTURES, DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION, OR THAT REPRESENT THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR THAT POSSESS HIGH ARTISTIC VALUES.

The house is included in the Mendon Center Historic District, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It meets Criteria A, B, C, and D of the National Register of Historic Places (from National Register Criteria Statement).

“Architecturally 34 George Street is significant as a well-sited, essentially intact example of crisply rendered Greek Revival domestic architecture. Few farmsteads in Mendon, or for that matter, Worcester County can match this property’s memorable combination of scenic pastures, weathered farm buildings, old stone walls and intact c. 1830 farmhouse. Situated on a rise across the street from an old burial ground, this house possesses a gable block form. Its 5x3 bay main block has a center hall plan. Its main façade is sheathed with clapboards. Wide-panelled Doric pilasters accent its corners. Beneath the George Street façade’s eaves is a wide fascia board. Its windows contain 6/6 wood sash. This house rises 1 ½ stories from a granite block basement to an asbestos shingle-covered gable roof with return eaves. Front door features handsome, heavy Greek Revival enframements. It meets A, B, C, D criteria of National Historic Register.” (from National Register of Historic Places narrative)

The motion was seconded by A. DeWitt and passed unanimously.

Action Item ⇒ T. Willoughby to notify the Building Department that there must be a hearing before the application can be approved.

Action Item ⇒ T. Willoughby to write a letter to the applicant informing him of the Historical Commission’s action. A copy of the demolition delay bylaw will be included, the letter will highlight Section 4 of the bylaw.

8:22 Olney Cook Artisan Shop

There was a single bid to complete the work on the shop: Vareika Construction. Phillip Warbasse, architect with Chenot and Associates, has talked to the bidder and asked for information on historical projects and a list of related references.



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8:30 Outstanding Action Items.

The Commission discussed outstanding action items.

- J. Lowell: Determine what preservation restriction is on the Town Hall. Update: J. Lowell has a copy of the restriction. Michael Steinitz (of Massachusetts Historical Commission) stated that the only fee is the recording cost. The holder of the restriction must be Massachusetts Historical Commission or a non-profit.
- W. Wagner: Approach CPC to get on their agenda for a future meeting. Update: The Commission discussed using CPC "administrative funds" to have Phillip Warbasse look at the Housing Authority Barn.
- **Action Item** ⇒ A. DeWitt will work out how to return the CPC funds that were not used for the Olney Cook Artisan Shop.

8:50 Motion to Adjourn

J. Lowell made a motion to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by A. DeWitt. The motion passed unanimously.