



Historic Salem, Inc. presents the 2016 Preservation Awards

Cotting Smith Assembly House, 138 Federal Street

The Cotting-Smith Assembly House is one of many Historic Buildings the Peabody Essex Museum owns on their campus and throughout Salem neighborhoods. Groundroot Preservation Group of Maine was originally commissioned to do Historic Structures reports on 11 of these buildings but Museum experts quickly realized that in order to be effective stewards of these buildings they needed complete reports on 16 of the buildings and expand the effort into a preservation plan. The result is a two pronged short and long term plan for the historic buildings on PEM campus and in Salem neighborhoods.

The first prong was a creation of a five year timeline for needed maintenance, restoration and capital expenditures with a continuing plan for recurring maintenance over the next decades. The restoration of the Cotting-Smith Assembly house is a result of this phase of the project, as was work on the Ropes Mansion that we recognized last year and upcoming work on the Peirce Nichols House.

The Assembly house was built in 1782 and remodeled in 1796 by Samuel McIntire. The museum has owned it since 1965 and it has continued to be used for events. Restoration work began in 2014 and included window restoration, façade repair and restoration, restoration of historic iron fence and brownstone curbing, landscape restoration, roof systems restoration and painting.

The 2nd part of this stewardship planning effort is the development of a continual long term strategy for the Museum buildings and how they might be used well into the future. This includes not just how they will be interpreted and displayed, but how they might be utilized as an active part of the museum's programming and gallery space, meeting and office space, and innovative uses yet to be developed.

The museum as a whole is a fantastic resource for our community, and furthermore, these historic buildings nestled in the neighborhoods, with the potential for events and exhibits, in some cases literally in our back yards is a priceless amenity. We commend the museum on the physical preservation of the Cotting-Smith Assembly House and look forward to the realization of their long term use plans for the buildings throughout the city.

City of Salem Preservation Plan Update

The work of preservation is never done. Preservation efforts focus on the past while also being forward looking and proactive. This applies to the city's update of their Preservation Plan. The previous several-decades-old plan had a pretty thorough listing of the historic resources in the city but was filled with recommendations that had been accomplished or become outdated. This new preservation plan rounds out that inventory and suggests a myriad of proactive preservation strategies that will safeguard our shared historic resources.

The Preservation Plan catalogues the historic resources in the city including city, private and non-profit owned buildings and the historic neighborhoods. It suggests partnerships that can be continued or developed. It lists concrete actions the city can take over the next decade to strengthen the preservation position of the city. For example it calls for more neighborhoods to have historic resource inventory forms prepared, for the current Local Historic District boundaries to be evaluated, for greater cooperation between the Salem Historical Commission and other review boards and it even has some tasks for Historic Salem to tackle.



The project was led by Lynn Duncan, Natalie Lovett and Erin Schaffer of the Department of Planning and Community Development. Funding and oversight was provided by the Massachusetts Historical Commission. Patricia Kelleher was the City's consultant for the project. This updated Preservation Plan gives the city and its stakeholders a clear roadmap for continued preservation efforts in the city, we thank the city for undertaking this effort.

Hamilton Hall Eagle Restoration

In 1805 the newly built Hamilton Hall was adorned with a wooden eagle carved by esteemed artisan Samuel McIntire. The eagle was as a symbol of this still new nation and McIntire was one of the first artists to interpret it in works throughout the city. Of those many McIntire eagle carvings the Hamilton Hall Eagle is the only one to survive. And it did survive nearly 210 years of New England weather in remarkably good condition.

When conservator Chritine Thompson took it into her shop there surprisingly few spots that needed to be replaced. Nevertheless, the expert recommendation was to move the eagle inside. Therefore, after being carefully removed from the exterior wall it was cleaned, old paint was removed, the wood was restored and it was installed inside Hamilton Hall in the Pickering Room. During this process Robert Shure of Skylight Studios created a resin replica that now fills the original location outside Hamilton Hall.

The eagle campaign took several years of planning, research and fundraising and we commend the Hamilton Hall Board and the Eagle Campaign Committee for their dedication in completing this conservation project.

The Horace C. Ware House, 107 Highland Avenue

The 1880 Horace C. Ware House was built for the son of the farmer who originally owned much of the property along what had just become Highland Avenue. Most recently this Italianate house was used as a dermatologists office. Sure, it retained enough detailing and design that anyone who noticed would recognize the tall window placement, trim and cornice brackets. However the drab exterior and distracting signage did little to draw attention to this once stately home on a main avenue. When the medical office closed Robert Willwerth purchased the property and determined that he would showcase the Italianate detailing as part of the building's rehabilitation into residential condo use.

This rehab project is a great example of respect. The project respected Highland Avenue as a historic corridor between Salem and Lynn and celebrated its historic roots. This eye catching building awakens travelers to the other historic buildings along this route that may have gone unnoticed and tells us that even buildings on this busy corridor deserve attention and care. It shows respect for historic details that could have been ignored, removed or minimized but were recognized as noteworthy and beautiful. The process also demonstrates respect for the neighborhood, Mr. Willwerth distributed informational sheets to the neighbors and invited them over to learn about his project, answering questions and making adjustments to the project as needed.

We thank Robert Willwerth and those who worked with him for their efforts to respect preservation on Highland Avenue.



The Merchant, 148 Washington Street, The Joshua Ward House

The 1784 Joshua Ward House is one of the oldest brick houses in Salem. Originally built overlooking the South River and the wharfs beyond and it has interior wood work designed by Samuel McIntire. After dancing the night away at the Cotting Smith Assembly House, George Washington spent the night in this house. Sadly, as the years went its glory faded and it faced demolition in the 1960s when a developer proposed tearing it down as it was cluttering up the retail buildings that at that time sat in front of it along Washington Street.

Thankfully cooler heads prevailed and the brick building was saved while the retail spaces were removed and it most recently lived on as the regal host of the Higginson Book company offices.

We must recognize that when the building, in such a prime downtown location, was vacated two years ago, the new owners could have simply undertaken an ordinary rehab of the building and given Salem some condos, office space or even a “nice-enough” place to stay. But Todd and Kimberly Waller showed their appreciation and respect for this significant building, as well as a stunning sense of style and hospitality with their renovation of the Ward House into the Merchant Hotel.

The project was made feasible by utilization of State and Federal Tax Credits and that meant that this historic renovation came with the exacting standards administered by the Secretary of the Interior. These standards were met with an exacting design expertise. The architectural design was done by Seger Architects and the dazzling interiors were a collaboration between interior designer Rachel Reider and the owner, Kimberley. Epsilon, Inc. steered the project through the tax credit process and the resulting building you experience was constructed by Lelund Hussey builders.

Most notable when you visit the hotel is the gleaming woodwork, much of it original and the welcoming fireplace in the lounge. The owners researched many window options before deciding on the installation of new true divided light wooden windows. The HVAC is handled by an energy efficient yet subtle Mitsubishi Slimline system which replaced a clunky and very visible exterior air handler. The roof is faux slate, the balustrade and two of the chimneys were reconstructed and the fence and porticos were rehabilitated. All this work was done by local craftspeople who understood how unique the building is and gave special attention to even the smallest detail.

Hermanski Balustrade 5 Monroe Street

The setting for the Taylor-Hermanski home at 5 Monroe Street couldn't be more picturesque, with the library building just to the west and the fountain in the foreground this house creates a beautiful vignette for passersby. But really it is not the setting for which one notices the house, but the obvious craftsmanship and care which has been lavished by the owners on the building. The colors are bright and the details are crisp and the energy spent on the house shines. Years ago we recognized the bulk of the work that has gone into the house. The award today is specifically recognizing the craftsmanship that went into the restoration of the exterior balustrade above the front entry. It is notable that this project was nominated by Bob Levesque of American Tower and Steeple, who, as a professional woodworker could find fellowship with the work of a “hobbyist”. As in anything, it is in the details that set something apart and we commend John Hermanski for letting those details shine.



North Shore Community Development Corporation

Often times we take for granted how unique it is to live in a city where something built in 1915 is “new.” But with the recent 100th anniversary of the Great Salem Fire and with even post-war housing now older than 50 years it is long past time to let a few more Salem neighborhoods into the historic neighborhood club. Kudos then, to the North Shore CDC for leading the successful effort to get the Point Neighborhood listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a tie-in to the commemoration of the Salem Fire. This neighborhood has particular significance in the history of our city as the traditional gathering place for diverse immigrant groups as early as 1850.

The historic significance of this neighborhood is found in its architecture, the story of rebuilding after the fire, the commercial connection with the Point neighborhood and the mills to the east and the cultural history of the immigrant groups who have lived in this neighborhood.

National Register listing is not a designation that controls development in a neighborhood, rather it is an enabling designation that allows for better development through use of Historic Tax Credits. It is with this advantage that the North Shore CDC was able to advance historically appropriate renovations for 11 buildings in the neighborhood with five more to come.

The CDC acts as another example this evening of proactive stewardship of historic buildings by providing quality rental housing in these buildings.