



Dorchester Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

Dorchester Historical Society, 195 Boston Street, Dorchester, Massachusetts 02125-1613
www.historic.org/dorchester

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DHS expands its preservation activities

(The Dorchester Historical Society's interest in preserving buildings of historic significance throughout Dorchester led to the creation of the Architectural Preservation Committee last year, a group of people from all over Dorchester whose goal is to stay informed about development and demolition in the community. The group advocates for the preservation of significant properties through the process established by the City of Boston.

In a recent discussion of these issues, the DHS Board of Directors thought it would be useful, in its role as a source of information, to publicize the process by which threatened properties could be saved. What follows was written by Roysin E.A. Billet of the City of Boston Landmarks Commission).

The increasing development pressures Dorchester has been experiencing have prompted a neighborhood discussion about how to curb the loss of historic buildings to the wrecking ball. The Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) plays an important role in neighborhood preservation. Through its administration of Article 85, Chapter 665 of the Acts of 1956 as amended (Demolition Delay), and Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975, as amended, (the enabling legislation establishing the BLC) the BLC can provide a forum for public discussion of proposed demolition and can designate historic buildings as local Landmarks. These are effective tools for neighborhood preservation, though not widely understood. This article is intended to demystify these processes as well as to point out their limitations.

Demolition Delay

Demolition Delay review pertains to applications involving the total demolition of buildings located within the city's limits. Prior to receiving a demolition permit from the Inspectional Services Department (ISD), project proponents must submit an Article 85 application to the BLC. Applying the criteria outlined in Article 85, the staff of the BLC then determine whether a demolition permit may be issued or whether a hearing is required. If the building meets the criteria for a public hearing, the BLC may invoke a 90 day demolition delay if it finds that it is in the public interest for the building to be preserved rather than demolished. During those 90 days, the Commission encourages

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MORE PROPERTIES ADDED TO ENDANGERED LIST

Our Architectural Preservation Committee was formed last year in response to news that several of Dorchester's landmark properties were facing demolition. The committee's first action was to publicize a top ten endangered properties list at the annual meeting in May 2004 (see below). The list combines Dorchester buildings that have been recognized as threatened for years by such organizations as Historic Boston, and buildings newly purchased by developers for demolition. The local press – *The Dorchester Reporter* and *The Boston Globe* – have both featured coverage of the newly urgent emerging issue.

Over the past few months another property, 44 Virginia St. near Uphams Corner, was slated for immediate demolition. The house suffers from deferred maintenance, and its owner, the Catholic Archdiocese, cited a danger of imminent collapse and

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- CA. 1800 LUTHER SPEAR HOUSE, 66 FREEPORT ST.
- CA. 1850 STOUGHTON SCHOOL (K OF C HALL) RIVER ST.
- 1881 GEORGE MILLIKEN HOUSE, 44 VIRGINIA ST.
- 1893 CAPT. GEORGE FROST MANSION (MULRY FUNERAL HOME) 223 NEPONSET AVE.
- 1822 ROBERT PIERCE TOLMAN HOUSE (DOLAN FUNERAL HOME) WASHINGTON AND RIVER STREETS
- 1890 MT. PLEASANT HOME FOR AGED MEN AND WOMEN (NELSON MANOR), 3 ASPINWAL ROAD
- 1750 CLARK FARM (EPSTEIN PROPERTY) NORFOLK ST.
- PUTNAM NAIL FACTORY/LAWLEY SHIPYARD, 12 ERICSSON ST.
- FIRST PARISH CHURCH; SECOND PARISH CHURCH; CATHOLIC CHURCHES; 19TH CENTURY CARRIAGE HOUSES
- CALF PASTURE PUMPING STATION, COLUMBIA POINT

President's Message

Since our last newsletter we have had a number of fun programs. David Kilroy spoke about Roswell Gleason's nineteenth-century pewter business, which was located on Washington Street. Several members of the Pewter Collectors Club of America attended and brought pieces from their collections. Mr. Kilroy said that the selection assembled at the William Clapp House was the largest gathering of Gleason pieces in one spot since the days when the factory was open.

Our map night was a wonderful success. Members of the Historical Society and other Dorchester residents brought their treasures to share. It was a wonderful overflow crowd that created quite a buzz in our meeting room. We need to repeat this program so that everyone can get another look at some of these rare maps and atlases.

The fund-raising concert for the benefit of the textile collection took place on April 30. Gabriella Sanna, a pianist, originally from Italy and now chair of the Chamber Music Department at the Rivers Music School in Weston, played an invigorating program including pieces by Liszt and Beethoven. Thanks to your generosity, we raised over \$2,000 in gross receipts, which allows us to care for items such as the dress pictured here. This dress is the newest donation to our collection and has a label: G.C. Hanes, 26 Frost Avenue, Dorchester. Hanes is listed at that address in the 1900 and 1902 Dorchester Blue Books. (These volumes served a function similar to a social register).



The Annual Meeting on May 19 featured a slide lecture by Robert Severy, DHS Historian, on the topic of Adams Street. Prior to the lecture, the election for the new Board of Directors for 2005-2006 was held. (See list on this page). We welcome all to their new duties.

We've had a great season once again, and we look forward to our future events. The June Open House will take place on June 25, so watch for the invitation.

*Earl Taylor, President
Board of Directors*

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*After 375 years, you can still
visit the old neighborhood*

Annual Spring Open House

Saturday, June 25

5 p.m.

William Clapp House

195 Boston Street

An evening of music, food and conversation

RSVP by June 20 at 617-265-7802



EDITOR:

Earl Taylor

GRAPHIC DESIGN:

BARBARA LANGIS

COPY EDITING:

Peggy Mullen

CONTRIBUTORS:

ROSANNE FOLEY

CAROLYN HUGHES

Codman Academy students research Dorchester women

Is a needlework picture a historical document? What about a band box? Can you read a house to find evidence about the lives of the women who worked there? Those were some of the questions explored by a group of students from Codman Academy when they visited the William Clapp House on March 26.

Ten students, sophomores and juniors, are researching women from Dorchester who could potentially be part of the first



Students from Codman Academy get a tour of the old kitchen at the William Clapp House.

historical walking trail designed to honor Dorchester women. Over the course of the semester, the girls will develop and design a walking tour brochure. The project is funded by a Save Our History grant from the History Channel, awarded

to the Boston Women's Heritage Trail in partnership with Codman Academy. The Dorchester Historical Society is providing research support for the project and assisting with curriculum planning.

The course focuses on famous Dorchester women, such as suffragette Lucy Stone and others who played key roles in the community. Some of the women include Sarah Baker, an invalid spinster from Savin Hill who carried on her own small, profitable cottage industry making band boxes in the early 19th century. Mary Safford Blake, who briefly lived on Meeting House Hill, is credited with being the first woman gynecologist. Elida Fowle was the youngest woman to be accepted by Clara Barton as a nurse in the Civil War (at age 17); she helped bring hundreds of emancipated African Americans out of the South, including two young charges raised in her home in Upham's Corner and sent to Dorchester schools.

During their morning at the Clapp House, the girls got a rare look behind the scenes, delving into areas of the historic site not ordinarily seen by the public.

The Clapp House is one of many hands-on experiences designed to give the students an appreciation for local history and the value of historic preservation.

Dorchester has so many neighborhoods rich in women's history, we expect that this may just be the first in a series of Dorchester Women's Heritage Trails. Look for the brochure at your local branch library this summer.

Landmarks Commission

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the developer to consider alternatives to demolition with community input. However, the applicant is not required to consider alternatives and may, in fact, wait out the delay and demolish the building when it expires, unless further action is taken to designate the building a Boston Landmark.

Historic Designation

There are two types of historic designation: listing on the National Register of Historic Places, the federal list of properties considered worthy of preservation, and designation as a Boston Landmark, a local designation. Properties listed on the National Register are eligible for historic tax credits for substantial rehabilitation if they are income-producing properties. These tax credits are often important funding sources for developers. Properties listed on the National Register receive limited protection, however. When tax credits are being used, the Department of the Interior requires that developers adhere to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. However, projects impacting properties listed or determined eligible for listing on the National Register are only reviewed if state or federal funding, permitting, or licensing is involved. Privately funded projects are not subject to review.

Local landmark designation is the city's highest honor for historic properties. It offers more protection than National Register listing by requiring review and approval of all exterior alterations. Interiors are only eligible for designation if they are public spaces. Interiors of private homes and religious properties are generally not eligible for landmark designation. In order for a building to be designated a Boston Landmark, it must be significant at least at the State level, if not at the regional, or national level. Properties that are significant only to the city of Boston do not meet the criteria for landmark designation.

The process for designating a property a Boston Landmark begins with a petition signed by at least ten registered voters of the city of Boston. A petition may also be submitted by the Mayor or any member of the Boston Landmarks Commission. The Commission then votes to accept or deny that petition for further study. If the vote is favorable, the petition goes on a list of properties pending designation and moves forward when the BLC votes to do so. Each year two to three properties move forward with designation. This requires the staff to prepare a study report and to

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Preservation throughout the community a new priority

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a desire for better access to a parking area behind the house. At a Boston Landmarks Commission (BLC) hearing Aug. 10, a neighbors group working with the Architectural Preservation Committee got a stay of execution for 44 Virginia St., which allows 90 days to work with the owner on a plan to save the house.

At the same hearing, a petition to grant historic landmark status to a building on the top ten list – the ca. 1850 Stoughton School – was accepted by BLC. A Lower Mills group will work with the developer to save the building and research will be conducted to determine whether landmark status is warranted.

Updates on other buildings on top ten list: The ca. 1810 Luther Spear house at 606 Freeport St. was moved: the house movers say the historic hearth cannot be moved so will be replicated using the old bricks; the architect has changed the plans at the committee's suggestion, so a new front door will not have to be cut into the gable end once the old house is moved to its new location on Nahant Ave.

The owner of Nelson Manor at 3 Aspinwall Road has received neighbors' and the city's okay to demolish the old nursing home and build condos on the lot.

There are several other houses the committee is investigating: 103 Minot (the Seth Crane House ca. 1830); 487 Norfolk St., Mattapan (the Clark Farm ca. 1750); 9-11 Grant Place in Lower Mills and three properties on Neponset Ave. have been purchased for demolition.

A house on Park St. has been sitting vacant and deteriorating for years. And 386 Ashmont St. (with lots of land) was recently bought by a realty corporation.

The property at 1615 Dorchester Ave, a ca. 1831 house, was recently demolished. Ray Tomasini of 24 Grampian Way (from the 2004 top ten endangered list) recently passed away.

The DHS welcomes involvement from all those interested in these issues. Contact Rosanne Foley via email at rafdotmass@aol.com.

Landmarks

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hold public hearings before the final vote of designation. Confirmation by the Mayor and City Council is required to make the designation official.

Neighborhood preservation tools is too large a topic to be addressed comprehensively in this format. The staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission is always available to answer your questions and address your concerns. We try to help neighborhoods preserve their character-defining buildings using the tools we have available to us. Unfortunately, they have their limitations, but when applied appropriately, can achieve a great deal of effective preservation.



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