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www.nbptpreservationtrust.org

Linking the past with the present and future



Quarterly Newsletter of the Newburyport Preservation Trust

Fall 2016



Above is the Federal-era house at 249 High Street in Newburyport, one of several gutted houses noted by former Newburyport resident Prudence Fish in a recent blog post that received widespread attention.

Care about Newburyport's history & preservation? NPT needs YOUR skills!

As a member of the **Newburyport Preservation Trust**, you have already demonstrated your interest in preserving Newburyport's architectural assets and distinctive ambiance. As our programs expand, we're hoping you might offer your unique skills and valuable experience to our core working group.

For example, do you have an interest in press relations? What about experience in event organization? Or knowledge of navigating public policy? Or do you have other skills that can help serve our mission of preservation education and advocacy?

Everything NPT does is by volunteers: The education programs, the preservation consultations, the preservation advocacy, the Preservation Week planning, and more. So we would like to hear from you. If you can take a more active role with your energy, skills, and ideas, please contact us at npt@nbptpreservationtrust.org. Thank you. ■

Former Newburyporter's blog post drills open a raw preservation nerve

'Why are You Gutting That House?' blog post gets nationwide response

Response to a recent moving and insightful blog posting by a former Newburyport resident and preservation advocate took everyone by surprise, scoring heavily in Facebook links and blog re-postings across the U.S., with nearly 3000 readers in the first 24 hours.

It is clear that the topic of wanton gut-jobs perpetrated on treasured old buildings, whether legally permitted or not, is a topic of widespread interest.

The October 13, 2016 blog posting by Gloucester resident Prudence Fish, a former Newburyport homeowner, real estate professional, and author of *Old Houses of Gloucester* (2007), was entitled "Why are You Gutting That House," and was posted on her blog, "Antique Houses of Gloucester and Beyond."

Subtitled "Restoration Needs a Gentle Hand," Fish wrote of a drive – with camera in hand – from Gloucester to her former adopted city of Newburyport, in which she

took note of the increasing tendency of developers to fill Dumpsters with the authentic original innards of an old building, retain some semblance of the exterior shell, and then call the result "preservation." The blog posting resonated with her personal nostalgia as she recalled the slow, steady, and careful approach of homeowner restoration in still-depressed-but-on-the-rise 1970s Newburyport.

"At that time many other families were moving to Newburyport, excited by the houses and the redevelopment that was just beginning," she wrote. "There was a lot of 'do it yourself' restoration going on, people helped each other and everyone was careful to do the job right. There were no big Dumpsters in sight. Families lived in the houses as they slowly chipped away at the restoration. Features were saved, repaired, and reused. ... Very gently, one house after another was coaxed back to life."

"These houses weren't Disney-like reproductions," she continued, her affection for Newburyport apparent. "They were the real thing. The care and the research devoted to the rebirth of the city was exemplary and

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This holiday season, NPT gift membership is 'just the ticket' for the preservationist

The gift-giving season will soon be upon us, and this year, instead of gimcracks and gewgaws, consider giving a Newburyport Preservation Trust gift membership to the history/preservation enthusiast on your list.

A gift membership to NPT is an ideal way to welcome family, friends, or neighbors who are new to the city's preservation history – past and present.

Membership categories: Individual (\$25), Sustaining (\$45), Supporting (\$75), Friend (\$100), Patron (\$250), and Benefactor (\$500).

To purchase a gift membership, go to the Membership page of the NPT website (www.nbptpreservationtrust.org), choose a membership level, and select "gift" in the "type of member" drop-down box. (You'll be prompted to enter the name of the new member, who can fill in their preferred contact details at a later date.) Pay online or by check (via postal mail). Upon receipt of payment, we will send you a gift certificate card which you can inscribe and present to the grateful recipient. ■

NPT's Historic House Plaque Program continues to churn out research...and plaques

This fall the Newburyport Preservation Trust celebrates two successful years of research for the Historic House Plaque Program. The experience has led to refinements in the program, a smoother process, and a clearer mission.

At this writing, this NPT program has placed 10 plaques on historic houses in Newburyport, with its findings based upon rigorous deed research. The homeowner, the neighborhood, and the community at large benefit from having this fact-based information about the house visibly accessible to the public.

The Historic House Plaque Program also serves to complement the *Walk Newburyport*

booklet compiled by the Newburyport Preservation Trust. This informative book is available at local bookstores as well as on the NPT website, www.NbptPreservationTrust.org.

Central to NPT's Historic House Plaque Program, and of particular historical value, is the verification of dates, names, and facts by professional researchers. For information on ordering a historic house plaque, or gifting one to someone you know, please consult the NPT website. ■

At top right is The Capt. Caleb Woodbury House (c. 1810) at 46 Purchase Street. At bottom right is the Philip K. Remick House (c. 1849) at 67 Federal Street.



NPT members enjoy the Samuel Bayley House at 'Serving Up Storied Homes' fund-raising event

Newburyport Preservation Trust members and guests gathered at the Samuel Bayley House on Saturday, October 15, 4-7 p.m. for the first in the 'Serving Up Storied Homes' series of fund-raising events in the historic homes of Newburyport.

NPT members Matthew Hott and Dr. Olaf Hedrich hosted the event at their 11 Spring Street home, a classic New England

At left are exterior and interior views of the 1785 Samuel Bayley House at 11 Spring Street, Newburyport, site of the recent "Serving Up Storied Homes" event.

Georgian house built by Newburyport merchant Samuel Bayley in 1785. Those attending the limited-registration event enjoyed drinks, hors d'oeuvres, live music-and-song, stories of Samuel Bayley, a video of the home's history, and a tour of the house that showcased the interior details that are still intact after 231 years.

The Newburyport Preservation Trust thanks our hosts for opening their home for this event, the Grand Trunk Wine & Cheese shop of Newburyport for supplying wine, and the intrepid NPT board volunteers for coordinating essential details. ■

Words Not Necessary: This is 'Exploratory Demolition'?

1752 Georgian at 41-43 Washington St.

Exploratory?



Big response for blog post

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a model for other places waiting to be discovered and brought back to life."

The blog posting included specific observations about Newburyport gut-jobs in progress, and a plea for restraint. She acknowledged that towns throughout New England squander their architectural legacy in the same way, and urged homeowners to seek expert advice before ripping out original features, "or someday you may look back and think, "OMG. What did I do?"

To read comments on the NPT Facebook page, visit <https://www.facebook.com/newburyportpreservationtrust/>.

Read this blog posting and learn about Newburyport in the homeowner sweat-equity days before the million-dollar price tags at <https://prudencefish.blogspot.com/2016/10/why-are-you-gutting-that-house.html>. ■