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*Linking the past with the present and future*



*Quarterly Newsletter of the Newburyport Preservation Trust*

**Winter 2016**



Above is the Federal-era house at 77 Lime Street and its too-tall "addition" that ran afoul of the city's zoning regulations.

At left is Custom House Way, which will *not* be dug up for utility work.

Below is the Capt. James Clarkson House (c. 1790) at the corner of Boardman & Olive Sts., which will be the subject of future zoning board hearings.



## NPT's preservation advocacy sparks a cautious enthusiasm

NPT's preservation advocacy efforts have churned relentlessly since the previous newsletter in September 2015. With multiple preservation-relevant projects to monitor – in various stages of permitting, appeal, stealth hibernation, or back-to-the-drawing-board delay – the vigilance, presence, and participation of members makes a difference.

**Facebook is a "friend" of preservation.** Our Facebook page is now the place to go for the very latest on NPT's preservation advocacy, including short-notice calls-to-action. The NPT website remains the source of in-depth content on Newburyport history, architecture, and preservation, but Facebook is a better news and networking tool. Show us some Facebook love at: [www.facebook.com/newburyportpreservationtrust/](http://www.facebook.com/newburyportpreservationtrust/).

**Some recent NPT advocacy highlights:**

• **Custom House Way at Water Street.**

Excavation too close to the museum's foundation was averted thanks to NPT adding its voice to those of the Newburyport Maritime Society and the Public Settlers (*sic*) of the Newburyport Waterfront Trust, to persuade the city to place utilities for the harbor master facility on the other side of the building, with more clearance and less risk.

• **77 Lime Street.** NPT members crowded into at City Hall on Jan. 26 to speak in favor of enforcement of our zoning laws regarding the excessive height of the "addition" built at 77 Lime Street. The developers lost their appeal before the Zoning Board, and must return to seek approval of a new plan.

• **114-118 Merrimac Street.** The non-owner applicant's plan to build a two-family home – with a first-floor garage opening into the city's busiest intersection – is technically still alive. A revised plan will come before the Zoning Board of Appeals, and NPT will be there to advocate for the *preservation* of life-and-limb at this busy intersection.

• **8 Strong Street.** NPT pressed for an explanation, through an official public records request, on the demolition of the 1824 home at 8 Strong Street. (See page 2.)

• **48 Boardman Street.** Next up is the future of the Capt. James Clarkson House (c. 1790) at 48 Boardman St. The developer proposes to preserve the house as a single-family, and add a "carriage house" home on the lot – or proceed to Plan B. The developer has consulted with NPT and neighbors. The lot is too small for two free-standing homes without zoning/planning exceptions. ■

## Preservation education takes center stage at NPT's hands-on "Do It Ye Self" sessions

NPT's new "Do It Ye Self" series has been a big hit this season, confirming the interest and need for preservation education.

The series of bi-monthly, two-hour, low cost (\$15) demonstrations of preservation crafts – each with a hands-on participation component – has attracted homeowners and preservation craftspeople.

The first of the series, on October 24, was Glass Cutting & Window Glazing, with Alison Hardy. On December 12 was Repairing Rotten Wood with preservation

carpenter Jasper March. Both were at the Perkins "Mint" (Museum of Old Newbury).

The third in the series, Cooking in Beehive Ovens, with restoration mason Richard Irons, is scheduled for February 20 at a private home. This program sold out within one day of its announcement.

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At right are scenes from NPT's "Do It Ye Self" series. At top left is "Window Woman of New England" Alison Hardy. At top right is a close-up of epoxy repair in the hands of wood craftsman Jasper March. At bottom, attendees watch Jasper's demonstration.





**This Italianate Victorian** located at 6 Washington St. was featured on [www.Houzz.com](http://www.Houzz.com).

## Big-time exposure for a Newburyport home that sports an NPT Historic House Plaque

On January 23, 2016, the popular online magazine *Houzz.com* featured the restored Victorian home at 6 Washington Street in Newburyport – a home that also displays a newly-mounted plaque after professional research by the Newburyport Preservation Trust's Historic House Plaque Program.

The article, by interior decorator Mary Prince, is devoted to the remarkable, expressive, and sometimes kaleidoscopic interior make-overs. But any observant passerby will note the attentive exterior restoration and the preservation of the original windows.

Chris and Beth Calitri purchased the home in 2013, and have transformed its rooms into fresh contemporary spaces.

NPT research determined that the original owner of the 1857 home was jewelry maker and merchant James B. Fairbanks. Since then it has been the residence of two mayors, two ship captains, and a dentist.

To read the article about 6 Washington Street, visit <http://www.houzz.com/ideabooks/59413380/list/my-houzz-revitalized-1857-seaside-victorian-in-new-england>.

For more about the NPT Historic House Plaque Program: [www.nbptpreservationtrust.org](http://www.nbptpreservationtrust.org).

## Do It Ye Self ... continued from page 1

Scheduled for April 16 at the Perkins Printing & Engraving Plant ("the Mint") is Fabio Bardini, who will demonstrate the best practices in using masonry mortar.

The series was conceived by NPT board member and masonry craftsman Matt Blanchette, and is the product of his interests, family background, and timely encounters with craftsmen and preservation advocates.

While working as a high school teacher in a parallel career, Matt seized the opportunity to work and learn from a master of historic masonry, Richard Irons, on projects around New England. Today Matt has his own business, Heritage Masonry, and recently completed a dual master's degree in English and education at Salem State University. With interest in the trades and in education, Matt shared his rationale for the "Do It Ye Self" series in an interview coming soon on the NPT website. The following is an excerpt:

"The DIYs series came about for two reasons. First, among members of NPT, there was a growing interest in practical

advice: "How can I affordably restore my old house?" This was, and in my opinion, is the main focus of NPT. However, NPT has been fighting hard to uphold the standards that revived Newburyport and made it a desirable place to live, but its goals are sometimes misconstrued. Ergo, I see an opportunity to refocus our efforts on our core values, and with these workshops, turn the conversation back to preserving." ■

At right is restoration masonry expert **Richard Irons**, presenter of the "Cooking in Beehive Ovens" program on Feb. 20. The program sold out in less than 24 hours.



## Another one down, as health dept. order has legal precedence over new zoning laws

In summer 2015, the "man-bites-dog" incongruity of a family in *Newburyport* living in extreme squalid conditions made the national news. The Newburyport Health Department removed the family and condemned the home at 8 Strong Street.

With a prospective developer waiting in the wings to buy the property, the modest 1824 house was cleaned out and fumigated, and the Board of Health issued a demolition order. The Planning Dept. was apprised, and awaited the paperwork to begin the permitting procedure according to zoning laws that apply to contributing structures in the National Register Historic District.

But in a surprise to all city officials (except in the Building Dept.), the house was demolished on November 9. NPT's public records request was filed the next day.

The communications breakdown was the subject of a City Council Planning & Development Committee "of-the-whole" meeting on December 10 to investigate and press for more open communication in the future. Some questions remain unanswered.

At that meeting, a letter from the City Solicitor in reply to Mayor Donna Holaday's

request confirmed that by state law, a Board of Health demolition order does take precedence over local zoning regulations.

The good news since the demolition is that the developer has accommodated neighbors with a design for a new single-family home in scale with its surroundings. The plans received unanimous support from neighbors, and unanimous approval from the city's Zoning Board of Appeals. ■

– R.W. Bacon

## Preservation Week is May 10-15, 2016

This year's Newburyport Preservation Week, the annual signature event for the Newburyport Preservation Trust, is set for Tuesday through Sunday, May 10-15, 2016.

The focus this year is on the architecture and preservation of the city's many churches, old and new, and their presence that contributes to our sense of place. The theme: "Preserving the Architecture of Faith."

Mark your calendar now so you don't miss out on any of the presentations, tours, and activities now in the planning stages. ■

