

NEWBURYPORT
PRESERVATION TRUST

P. O. Box 184, Newburyport, MA 01950
www.nbptpreservationtrust.org

Linking the past with the present and future



Quarterly Newsletter of the Newburyport Preservation Trust

Winter 2021

Hundreds attend online William Lloyd Garrison lecture sponsored by NPT's Next Generation Preservationists

Nearly 300 viewers logged in Dec. 12, 2020 for a lecture presentation by scholar Kate Clifford Larson, "Lloyd and Moses: The Remarkable Friendship of William Lloyd Garrison and Harriet Tubman."

The lecture was funded by the Next Generation Preservationists, a group of Newburyport High School interns for the Newburyport Preservation Trust; and was co-sponsored by *The Daily News*. The lecture was hosted via the Zoom platform by the Newburyport Public Library.

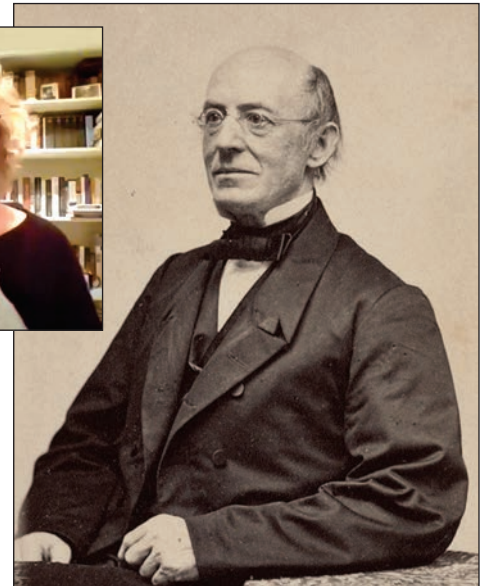
The lecture by Dr. Larson, a Women's Studies Research Scholar at Brandeis University, focused on the supportive relationship of Garrison, the abolitionist editor and publisher, and Tubman, the Underground Railroad activist, and their work in multiple areas of social justice.

In the opening remarks by Maximin Clement of the Next Generation Preservationists, he expressed his group's interest in the relationship between historic preservation, affordable housing, and environmental sustainability; wondered if gentrification and overbuilding would make Newburyport unrecognizable in the future; and predicted that "we will go out and apply the values and skills we've learned from the Trust into advocating for preservation wherever we end up."

The lecture can be viewed on Youtube at <https://youtu.be/LMnfzIKTKD0>. ■

"Lloyd and Moses: The Remarkable Friendship of William Lloyd Garrison and Harriet Tubman" was presented via Zoom on Dec. 12, 2020. Newburyport native William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879), the influential anti-slavery editor and publisher, and Harriet Tubman (1822-1913), activist and abolitionist, were united in action for social justice.

At immediate right are the presenter, Dr. Kate Clifford Larson, author of a biography of Harriet Tubman, *Bound for the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero* (2003); and Maximin Clement, who presented the opening remarks for NPT's Next Generation Preservationists, sponsors of the event. At far right is an 1870 photo portrait of William Lloyd Garrison.



Members can Zoom into NPT's Annual Meeting scheduled for Sunday, February 28, at 4 p.m.

The Newburyport Preservation Trust Annual Meeting will be held remotely via Zoom on Sunday, February 28, at 4 p.m.

All members are invited to attend. The procedure for authorization and log-in will be forthcoming to members by email. (Lapsed members are reminded to get up-to-date in order to get that coveted email!)

This year's meeting will include a recap of 2020 activities, advocacy, programs, and accomplishments, and a view of what 2021 and beyond look like for the organization.

NPT board members have prepared an presentation that includes updates on preservation advocacy before the city's Historical Commission, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals; the Historic House Plaque Program; Powder House Park & Learning Center; Next Generation

Preservationists; public communications; and organizational finances and planning.

We will miss the in-person conviviality of past meetings, but we can still feast – at safe distance – on a full platter of preservation. ■

What's the story with Preservation Week 2021?

In spring 2020, NPT's Preservation Week was cancelled in the interest of public health in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The hope was to be back with the annual event in 2021. But due to the difficulties of advance planning, and the still-unknown public health situation in the coming months, Preservation Week events in May are not possible. If alternatives materialize, NPT members will be the first to know. ■

Have you noticed?!?



The plaque from the Society of Professional Journalists in 1980 on the Garrison birthplace has been remounted. This "historic site in journalism" marker was the initiative of CBS news editor and Newburyport native Ed Bliss (1912-2002).

(Disclosure: Your Quarterly News editor is a 50-year SPJ member.)

Violation of city's pro-preservation zoning laws results in reduced penalty ... so the project continues



12-14 Harrison St.
2012 view



12-14 Harrison St.
Oct. 2020 view

In fall 2020, the NPT *Quarterly News* reported on the zoning violations and the city's Stop Work Order at 12-14 Harrison Street. This was after the new owner's construction crew demolished the original framing of the mid-18th-century Georgian house last summer, far in excess of the 25% allowed in the city's Demolition Control Overlay District (DCOD).

In the span of years since the city's pro-preservation zoning laws were approved and adopted unanimously by the City Council in early 2014, the city has weathered several cases that have tested the enforcement of these laws. What follows is a report on the disposition of the violation at 12-14 Harrison Street since the last issue of the *Quarterly News*.

After several public meetings – held via Zoom – the owner's lawyer pressed for, then withdrew applications for demolition permits after-the-fact, and then claimed the owner's ignorance of the law as an excuse for the violation. Ultimately, after a three-

hour hearing on December 8, 2020, the Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA), instead of imposing the penalty specified in the DCOD zoning law of a three-year moratorium on further construction, voted to allow the construction to proceed, with conditions. The conditions are (1) that the rear roof deck be removed from the plan, and (2) that the owners delay occupancy for six months after the issuance of an occupancy permit.

The Newburyport Preservation Trust and several public commenters urged the ZBA to uphold the three-year moratorium per the law, saying that waiving the penalties in our zoning laws would only encourage more demolitions. Other commenters among the public wished to see the stalled-out project continue, since the damage was already done and the construction site in limbo was a neighborhood eyesore.

The decision in this case would seem to ensure that Newburyport will get more chances to improve enforcement of its pro-preservation zoning laws. ■

NPT applies for CPA funding for Garrison birthplace interpretation

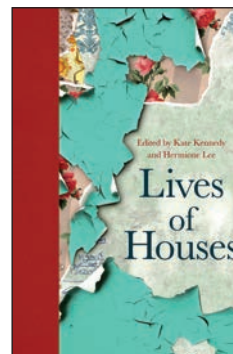
The Newburyport Preservation Trust (NPT) has applied to the city for Community Preservation Act (CPA) funding for interpretive panels to be placed across from the birthplace of anti-slavery crusader, editor, and publisher William Lloyd Garrison (1805-1879).

The two 18-inch x 24-inch panels, one about the mid-18th-century house at 3-5 School Street, the other about the life and influence of W.L. Garrison, will be installed at Garrison Gardens in Atwood Park. The Newburyport Preservation Trust has advised on the recent renovations to the Garrison birthplace across the street.

In addition to the Garrison-related public education goals for the panels, the application stated that information on the house will demonstrate that "small, modest historical homes can be equally or more worthy of preservation as the grander homes of the wealthy, to gain knowledge of a time and place."

Since endorsement of the project by the city's Parks Commission in fall 2020, NPT has engaged scholar Kate Clifford Larson (see pg. 1) to write the text. The graphic designer and panel fabricator are also lined up. NPT will select the photos for the panels, and will have final approval of the text and design.

NPT seeks \$3,694 in its application for CPA funds. Additional funding is also committed from the Newburyport Bank and the Gayden W. Morrill Foundation. If everything proceeds according to plan, the panels will be installed in late 2021. ■



'Lives of Houses' ... plus preservation notes from beyond our city

"What can a house tell us about the person who lives there? Do we shape the buildings we live in, or are we formed by the places we call home?"

Those are the first two enticing questions posed by Princeton University Press in its recent catalog promoting *Lives of*

Houses, a 2020 collection of essays from 25 contributors on the houses of great writers, artists, composers, and politicians of the past. Edited by Kate Kennedy and Hermione Lee, the 304 pages aim to illuminate what houses mean to us and how we use them to connect to and think about the past. Among the homes addressed in the essays are W.B. Yeats' flood-prone abode, the country retreat of composer Jean Sibelius, poet W.H. Auden's "joyful squalor," and Winston Churchill's dream house, Chartwell – that his wife hated.

- **They're a long way from Newburyport**, so we can laugh – perhaps nervously – at invented "old west" tourist towns where real effort and money is spent to preserve a past that never existed in the first place. In 2006 this phenomenon was the subject of *Historic Preservation and the Imagined West*, by Judy Mattivi Morley, that profiled places where developers and preservationists remade areas in ways that privilege an imagined "heritage" over real history.

- **Preservation policy in the news:** An article in the *New Yorker* magazine (Feb. 8) noted that neither of the two childhood homes of a certain former U.S. president qualify for landmark status from New York City's Landmarks Preservation Commission. ■