

Preservation News

Today's Historical Swampscott

2020 Preservation Awards

The Historical Commission has chosen its recipients for the 2020 Preservation Awards. The Commission will complete research on missing historic details of the properties, and will order plaques to be awarded to recipient properties, for some time in the future in accordance with social distancing recommendations.

See more details on our page on the town website, or our Facebook page.

Still working!

The Swampscott Historical Commission has been able to 'meet' virtually and convene business using the Zoom platform in accordance with the Town Hall requirements. The Commission continues to post its monthly meeting agendas and minutes on our page of the town website.

Swampscott's Interpretive Signage for Visitors

Historical interpretative signage is in process for four of Swampscott's historic sites: the Fish House, Town Hall, Andrews Chapel and Cemetery, and the Olmsted Historic District. The signage will display the historical background of key buildings and landmarks in town. The Historical Commission will contribute from its budget to fund the four signs. Working with the Community Planning Director, the Commission will investigate local graphic artists for the design, and members will contribute story and background information related to these Swampscott landmarks. Much of this information exists in the Massachusetts Historical Commission records, and old photographs can be provided from Swampscott's archives. The signs will also include QR codes readable by a visitor's mobile device, directing them to more historical narrative hosted on the town website. This project is the beginning point, with more historic sites to be selected for interpretive signage in the future. Swampscott received a matching grant for its interpretive signage from the Essex National Partnership Grant Program.

We will report more on this effort in our next newsletter edition.

Preservation Assessment Grant: Town-Wide Collections

A grant opportunity from the Massachusetts Board of Library Commissioners offered a program for towns to identify and fund a town-wide historic archive. This program will focus on a preservation assessment of collections in a community. It is the first step in preserving, organizing, and eventually sharing historically significant local collections in Massachusetts towns.

Old Police Station: HQ, Historical Commission

The Historical Commission has been using part of the old police station at 86 Burrill Street for its monthly meetings (pre-Covid19), and for storage of town archives. The Commission responded to the Town RFI this past May regarding suggested future use of the former police station. The Select Board agreed the building's continued use should be for municipal purposes. An assessment for any required building updates will be made, once specific uses are determined. The space will also be assessed as part of the MBLC grant awarded for the set up of the town-wide historic archive collection. The Commission will follow its RFI response with a formal submission to the upcoming RFP expected soon. Some of the suggested uses include offices converted for co-working, continued meeting space for the Commission and other town committees, historic archive repository, and a museum display of town artifacts resulting from the planned archiving effort. (See related article.)

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- ♦ Kim Barry, Newsletter Editor
- ♦ Consolidated spring and summer editions

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The candidate public library and its other local repositories will receive a preservation assessment conducted by an MBLC-hired consultant, which will help identify the conservation approach of the town-wide historic archives.

The grant was offered to public libraries as a one year program. At the end of June, the Swampscott Public Library was awarded \$22,500 from the MBLC, which will be used for the town-wide archiving effort of historic collections from: the Swampscott Public Library, the Historical Commission collection at 86 Burrill St, the Historical Society collection at the John Humphrey House, Town Hall archives, and possibly Police and Fire station archives. There is a vast amount of paper records, photographs, and objects in each collection that are not inventoried or catalogued. Most of the collections are in need of preservation work to prolong their lives and to enable them to be handled.

The next step will see a consultant assigned to do the assessment of the historic collections and the buildings where they are stored. The Historical Commission's archive collection at 86 Burrill St, was a major element of the RFI response the Commission provided to the Town regarding suggested use for the old police station building. (See related article.)

Following from the consultant's assessment, and once the collection has been properly restored and archived, the goal is to provide museum displays on a rotating basis within the public area at 86 Burrill St, to share many of the interesting artifacts from Swampscott's history with the public.

The Historical Commission will continue to partner with the Public Library in organizing the town-wide archive of historic records, as well as maintenance and operations of the public spaces. We look forward to increasing awareness of Swampscott's history through greater availability of town collections.

To support the Commission's programs, please send your donation to the town hall, designated as a gift for the Historical Commission.