



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
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MINUTES
RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
May 10, 2017

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Michael Abbott, AIA
Mr. Mohamad Farzan, AIA
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board
Mr. Karst Hoogeboom, Chairman
Ms. Lisa Lawless representing Janet Coit, Director DEM
Dr. Patrick Malone
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon
Mr. Pieter N. Roos
Mr. Edward F. Sanderson, State Historic Preservation Officer
Mr. Clark Schoettle
Ms. Ruth Taylor

STAFF PRESENT

Ms. Rosemary Carreiro, Fiscal Clerk
Ms. Joanna Doherty, Principal Architectural Historian
Mr. Jeffrey Emidy, Deputy Director
Dr. Timothy Ives, Principal Archaeologist
Ms. Katy Pomplun, Senior Grants Coordinator
Ms. Sarah Zurier, Principal Special Projects Coordinator
Ms. Elizabeth Warburton, Senior Architectural Historian

MEMBERS ABSENT

Mr. Al Cocce, AIA, representing John P. Leyden, State Building Commissioner
Mr. Darin Early, COO, Commerce RI
Mr. Kevin Nelson, representing the Associate Director of the Division of Planning
Dr. Ronald Onorato
Vacant

GUESTS

William R. Landry, Esq., Preservation Society of Newport County
John Rodman, Preservation Society of Newport County
Kaitly Ryan, Preservation Society of Newport County
Doug Kelleher, Epsilon Associates (Rochambeau Worsted Mill)
Geoff Melhuish, Epsilon Associates (Rochambeau Worsted Mill)
Dan Drazen, Trinity Financial (Rochambeau Worsted Mill)
Chris Stanley, Trinity Financial (Rochambeau Worsted Mill)

Edward Connors, National Register Consultant (Andrews Mill)
Joe Garlick, NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley (Andrews Mill)
Bill Lewis, NeighborWorks Blackstone River Valley (Andrews Mill)

II. AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:30 A.M., Mr. Hoogeboom, Chairman, presiding.

2. Minutes of April 12, 2017

On a motion by Mr. Farzan, seconded by Dr. Morenon, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to approve the Minutes of April 12, 2017.

3. Executive Director's Report

a) Mr. Sanderson reported that RIHPHC staff reviewed construction documents for The Breakers Welcome Center. The plans are consistent with the Commission vote on July 10, 2013 to approve the project. Copies of the April 25, 2017 approval letter were distributed.

On Tuesday, May 9, 2017, an organization called Friends of Newport Preservation sent a press release to RIHPHC criticizing RIHPHC approval of the Welcome Center project. According to the email, there was an internet link to a letter addressed to Governor Raimondo from FNP that requested the Governor to reverse RIHPHC's approval vote on July 10, 2013. The FNP asked that the Commission discuss this communication. However, the RIHPHC Agenda was posted on May 3, and this item was not sent until May 9. FNP has no standing to place items on the RIHPHC agenda, and the internet link to the Governor Raimondo letter was inoperable and therefore the letter was not received. For these reasons, the communication was not considered during the Commission meeting. Copies of the email were available after the meeting ended.

b) The 32nd annual Statewide Historic Preservation Conference was held with great success on Saturday May 29 in Watch Hill. The event was sold out a week in advance with 550 registrations. Commissioners congratulated Sarah Zurier for another outstanding conference.

c) The U. S. Congress has approved appropriations for Federal FY 2017. The Historic Preservation Fund totals \$80,910,000: \$47,925,000 is provided for SHPOs (a \$1 million increase); \$10,485,000 for grants to Tribes; competitive grants provide \$500,000 for underserved communities, \$13,000,000 to document, interpret, and preserve historical sites associated with the Civil Rights Movement, and \$4,000,000 to Historically Black Colleges and Universities; and \$5,000,000 for the Save America's Treasures restoration grants.

d) RIHPHC, the U. S. Navy, and the City of Newport have signed a memorandum of agreement to recognize and preserve the historic Navy Hospital complex in Newport. Under the agreement, RIHPHC will review and approve future development of the historic property.

e) The RI Department of Transportation has announced it will consider a plan to relocate Gaspee Street onto the State House lawn and construct a new bus transit hub on the grounds of Station Park. RIHPHC staff is collecting information about potential impacts to historic resources for review by the full Commission.

4. Planning for the Future

Mr. Sanderson made the following statement:

“After much thought about my future at RIHPHC, I believe that this is a good time for me and the Commission to plan for a transition. I’ll turn 70 in June, and the time is right for me to begin to disengage. I plan to resign as Executive Director in the coming months, but I’d like to help the Commission manage its transition to a new executive director.”

“I have worked at the Commission for 42 years. After serving as Deputy Director, I became Executive Director in 1984. I had the rare opportunity to work with Antoinette Downing and Fred Williamson, two great leaders of America’s historic preservation movement; and I have been privileged to work with outstanding professional RIHPHC staff members and Commissioners. The Commission is in very good hands today; our current staff is highly qualified and is doing excellent work. Over four decades, I have witnessed the Commission’s achievements, and today the Commission’s programs are fulfilling our mission to identify, preserve, and protect Rhode Island’s historic places and to recognize our state’s cultural heritage. The breadth and importance of RIHPHC’s accomplishments are impressive.”

“I recommend that the Commission name Jeff Emidy as Acting Executive Director when I resign, and I know he will do an excellent job. As Deputy Director and Deputy SHPO, Jeff already is authorized to manage all of our programs. This will be a big workload for him, and he will need your support.”

“During the period of time between my resignation and the time when a new permanent executive director assumes his/her duties my position will be vacant. I am willing to volunteer some of my time to assist Jeff and the Commission manage the transition to a new executive director. I suggest that I work with a selection committee appointed by the Commission to recruit and evaluate candidates for executive director. I also hope to finish up some ongoing projects and would help Jeff in any way he asks. I would like to continue to hold the title of State Historic Preservation Officer during this time.”

“Historic preservation at the RIHPHC is the only job I ever had; it has been very meaningful to me personally, and I believe our work has made a difference for Rhode Islanders. As Antoinette Downing and Fred Williamson preached time and again: ‘Rhode Island’s extraordinary historical resources are worth preserving.’ And I have observed that what really makes historic

preservation successful is the work that RIHPHC staff and commissioners do to help property owners, developers, planners and preservation advocates care for historic places year after year, project after project. Working together during my time here, we have restored more than 2,500 historic buildings, listed more than 10,000 properties on the National Register, and reviewed thousands of State and Federal projects that affected historical resources. Thank you to Commissioners and Staff for your work, the job isn't done yet."

During discussion, Commissioners expressed appreciation for Mr. Sanderson's career at RIHPHC and accepted his offer to assist during the transition period. Commissioners reviewed RIHPHC's authority to appoint an executive director in accordance with Rhode Island General Law 42-45-8 and discussed the selection process.

On a motion by Mr. Farzan, seconded by Mr. Roos, the Commission unanimously

VOTED that whereas, the Executive Director plans to retire during the summer of 2017;

Now therefore, the Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission appoints the current Deputy Director, Jeffrey Emidy, to serve as Acting Executive Director beginning on the day following the retirement of current Executive Director Edward F. Sanderson and continuing until a new permanent executive director is appointed and begins his/her service. The Acting Executive Director will be the Commission's authorized representative.

On a motion by Mr. Abbott, seconded by Mr. Schoettle and Dr. Malone, the Commission unanimously

VOTED that Whereas, Edward Sanderson plans to retire after working at the RIHPHC for 42 years, serving as executive director for 33 years; and

Whereas, he has volunteered to help the Commission manage its transition to a new executive director during the period of time between his resignation and the time when a new permanent executive director is appointed and assumes his/her duties, and the Commission has accepted this offer;

Now therefore, the Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission authorizes Edward F. Sanderson to

- assist a selection committee appointed by the Commission to recruit and evaluate executive director candidates;
- perform assignments if delegated by the Acting Executive Director;
- continue to hold the title of State Historic Preservation Officer at the pleasure of Governor Raimondo.

5. National Register of Historic Places

Final Approval: Rochambeau Worsted Company Mill, 60 King Street, Providence

Ms. Doherty presented information about the property.

The Rochambeau Worsted Company Mill was constructed ca. 1923, with several additions built between 1933 and 1984 on an approximately 8.65-acre lot on the north bank of the Woonasquatucket River in the Olneyville neighborhood of Providence. The ca. 1923 building was designed by Woonsocket, Rhode Island architect Walter Fontaine and built by O.D. Purington and Company of Providence. The building is three stories tall, constructed of brick with minimal ornamentation, features pier-and-spandrel walls, and is capped by a flat roof. Despite several later additions, the ca. 1923 building is a well-preserved example of industrial architecture constructed for textile manufacture and retains a high degree of historic and architectural integrity.

The Rochambeau Worsted Company Mill is significant at the state level under Criterion A in the area of industry, for its association with the French worsted industry in Rhode Island. The “French system” mills, which differed from English system mills in their spinning methods, garnered a foothold in the state during the last quarter of the 19th century and the first quarter of the 20th century, as the cotton spinning and weaving industry began to decline due to southern competition. The Rochambeau Worsted Company was the third textile-related operation in Rhode Island begun by the Lepoutre family of Roubaix, France; the first two were located in the city of Woonsocket, which had a large French-Canadian immigrant population. The construction of the Rochambeau Worsted Company Mill is illustrative of the expansion of French investment into Providence. The history of the mill also exemplifies the success and resilience of the French system mills; the company survived the Great Depression and even expanded in the mid-20th century, with its introduction of synthetic yarn manufacture. The Rochambeau Worsted Company Mill is also significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture, as a well-preserved example of early 20th-century industrial architecture in New England and for its association with the locally-significant architect Walter Fontaine. The ca. 1923 building has been expanded with a number of additions – typical of active industrial buildings – which themselves lack significance due to age and/or lack integrity. The ca. 1923 main block, however, retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The period of significance begins with the construction of the mill in ca. 1923 and extends to 1956, when the Rochambeau Worsted Company ceased operations at the site.

During discussion, Dr. Malone stressed the importance of French worsted production in Woonsocket and Providence. On a motion by Mr. Roos, seconded by Ms. Lawless, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to approve the National Register nomination.

Preliminary National Register review: Andrews Mill, Great Road, North Smithfield

Ms. Doherty presented information about the property.

The Andrews Mill is located on an approximately 32-acre site along the Branch River. According to information supplied to the RIHPHC by historic preservation consultant Edward Connors, the company was founded in 1918 by Andrew and Jules Demetre, brothers from Roubaix, France who had established a French worsted mill in Philadelphia in 1902, in partnership with Granville Beals of Warwick, RI. The North Smithfield mill produced French worsted for dress goods, men's wear and plushes. The property includes a main mill building/weave shed with attached boiler house, a freestanding machine shop, a concrete headrace gate at the location of a former mill trench, a steel water tower, and a masonry pump house, all built in 1918. The Andrews Mill operated only eight years until 1926. An attempt to reorganize in 1929 had failed by 1935. The Uxbridge Worsted Company purchased the property and operated into the 1950s. The Tupper Corporation, makers of "Tupperware," leased the property for use as a laboratory and administrative office in 1954, and purchased it outright in 1958. Tupper or its successor companies made many alterations to the property, sheathing the principal façade of the mill in aluminum panels and replacing the historic wood windows on the façade with aluminum-frame sash (mid-20th-century); constructing large, one-story additions on the west and north sides of the main mill (by 1962), as well as an enclosed loading dock off the north elevation (by 1972) and two pre-fabricated steel towers at the northwest corner (by 1981); and constructing two freestanding wastewater treatment buildings (late 1970s) and a freestanding office building (1979). Ms. Doherty reported the RIHPHC staff opinion that the limited historical information currently available and the significant alterations to the mill raise questions about whether the property meets National Register criteria.

During discussion, Mr. Abbott asked if the aluminum panels on the façade could be removed? Mr. Connors stated evidence of the original windows can be seen, but the full extent of changes to the façade has not been determined. Dr. Malone noted the significance of the surviving sawtooth roof structure, and he expressed interest in the "hybrid water and steam power system." In response to questions, Mr. Connors said he has not been able to see physical evidence or remnants of the water-power system or of steam or electrical power transmission in the main mill/weave shed.

Mr. Schoettle reported that NeighborWorks plans to rehabilitate the mill for apartments. He recused himself from the discussion and vote.

Chairman Hoozeboom noted that while some Commissioners appear to think the property is eligible, the Commission does not appear to have a consensus and that additional information and better photographs are needed.

On a motion by Mr. Abbott, seconded by Dr. Malone, the Commission

VOTED that RIHPHC is willing to consider further information and documentation about the property that might demonstrate its historical significance and integrity in order to support its

eligibility for National Register listing. Questions to be addressed include:

- How does the Andrews Mill Company contribute to the industrial history of North Smithfield and/or Rhode Island?
- How large was the workforce at the Andrews Mill over the course of its operation (1918-1926)? Was it a significant local employer? How large was the mill's output? Is there a direct link to World War I output?
- What was the nature of the partnership between the Demetre brothers and Granville Beals? Other than the personal involvement of Beals, is there any connection between the Andrews Mill and the Greenwich Mills in Warwick?
- Was the Andrews Mill designed by an architect or a mill engineer and, if so, did that individual design other historically significant industrial buildings?
- The Andrews Mill reportedly operated on a combination of steam and water power. Does physical evidence of the power system survive?
- What is the structural integrity of the sawtooth monitor roof, and can it be preserved and rehabilitated as part of the proposed adaptive reuse of the mill?
- What impact did the installation of the aluminum sheathing and replacement windows on the front elevation of the main mill have on the original exterior wall? Are original window and door openings intact?
- What impact did the construction of the additions on the north and west elevations of the main mill have on the original exterior walls? Were the original walls removed? If not, were original window and door openings filled in, and were new door openings created?
- How has the grading at the front of the main mill, along Great Road, changed over time and what impact has that had on the appearance, massing and structure of the building?

Mr. Schoettle did not vote.

6. Other Business: There was no other business.

7. Next regular meeting date: Wednesday June 14, 2017 at 9:30 AM.

8. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Minutes recorded by,



Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director
State Historic Preservation Officer