



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
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MINUTES

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
November 14, 2012

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Robert E. Cusack
Mr. Robert Goff
Mr. John Grosvenor, AIA
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon
Dr. Ronald Onorato
Mr. Jared L. Rhodes, Chief of Statewide Planning representing Kevin Flynn, Asso. Dir
Edward F. Sanderson, State Historic Preservation Officer & Executive Director

STAFF PRESENT

Ms. Sharon Allison, Sr. Grants Coordinator
Dr. Richard Greenwood, Deputy Director
Dr. Timothy Ives, Principal Archaeologist

GUESTS

Edward Connors, National Register consultant
Dr. Stanley Lemons & Sarah Bradford, First Baptist Meeting House
Nathaniel Taylor, General Allin House

MEMBERS ABSENT

Ms. Janet Coit, Director DEM
Mr. Karst Hoozeboom, Chairman
John P. Leyden, State Building Commissioner
Dr. Patrick Malone
Mr. Pieter N. Roos
Dr. Patricia Rubertone
Executive Director, EDC
1 Vacant

II. AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 9:35 A.M., Mr. Goff, presiding in the absence of Mr. Hooeboom.

2. Minutes of September 12, 2012

On a motion by Dr. Onorato, seconded by Dr. Morenon, the Commission unanimously VOTED to approve the Minutes of September 12, 2012.

3. Executive Director's Report

a) Mr. Sanderson reported that Hurricane Sandy did little damage to historic properties in Rhode Island. Weekapaug Inn and Ocean House both came through the storm basically unharmed. RIHPHC staff have been working with RIDOT to review and approve emergency repairs to several roads in the coastal zone.

Dr. Ives reported on his inspection of a damaged section of Corn Neck Road on Block Island. He discovered that an intact layer of prehistoric soil was exposed by storm erosion. The soil layer extends under the roadway along the eastern boundary of the Great Salt Pond Archaeological District which is listed on the National Register. Dr. Ives observed quartz lithics imbedded in the soil, probably dating from several thousand years ago. At the request of RIHPHC, RIDOT is conducting archaeology on the exposed prehistoric soil layer prior to completing reconstruction of Corn Neck Road.

b) Dr. Greenwood reported on continuing efforts to preserve the 1810 Lippitt Mill in West Warwick. The Owner apparently is willing to subdivide the parcel of land with the historic mill from a larger parcel which he intends to clear for future redevelopment. RIHPHC is seeking potential developers of the historic mill property.

c) Mr. Sanderson reported that RIHPHC staff are continuing to consult with the Navy regarding plans to install wind turbines on Navy land on Aquidneck Island. RIHPHC has expressed concern that some proposed turbines would adversely affect the visual context for significant historic properties. The National Park Service and the federal Advisory Council on Historic Preservation have joined RIHPHC in reviewing this project. A meeting with all parties is scheduled for November 15.

d) Mr. Sanderson reported that the First Baptist Meeting House in Providence has submitted plans for landscape and site improvements. RIHPHC holds a historic preservation easement on the historic property as the result of a State Preservation Grant awarded by the

Commission. The plans were prepared by Bradford Associates, Landscape Architects. When Mr. Sanderson first reviewed the plans in September, he concluded that overall, the proposed work represents well designed and needed repairs and improvements. There is a variety of historic paving materials that will be preserved and repaired, including cobblestone gutters and stone and brick walkways. In some areas, brick pavers appear to have been damaged by use for automobile parking. The repair and re-configuration of the Thomas Street walk is acceptable. Proposed additional tree plantings appear appropriate and should enhance the setting of the Meeting House. A proposed Contemplative Garden is a new, non-historic feature; it will be located in the southeast corner of the property, and it will not affect the property's historic character.

Parking is a serious issue for the property. Only very limited onsite parking is available on the existing asphalt drive behind the Meeting House. Frequently one or two cars park on a brick-paved area just east of the south entrance. Parking in this location detracts from the historical character of the Meeting House property. A change to the proposed plans (10/23/2012) shows reconstruction of this brick area to accommodate parking for five vehicles. Mr. Sanderson reported that he has discussed this issue with RIHPHC Chairman Karst Hoogeboom, a professional landscape architect, and he and Mr. Hoogeboom do not recommend approval for the proposed additional parking.

Dr. Lemons, representing the Meetinghouse, explained that the available on-site parking is not adequate for weekday demands of church staff and volunteers. There is no street parking in the immediate area. On Sundays, the City of Providence has for many years allowed on-street parking which has worked well for the congregation. Dr. Lemons acknowledged that expanding on-site parking is not ideal for preserving the historic character of this landmark, and he expressed willingness to work with Mr. Sanderson to seek the City's permission to create new parking spaces on Waterman Street that would be reserved for use by Meeting House staff and visitors.

Dr. Onorato expressed the general opinion of RIHPHC Commissioners that an on-street alternative would be very preferable to the proposed construction of five additional on-site parking places. Dr. Lemons and Mr. Sanderson will pursue this approach, and the Commission took no formal action.

4. National Register

Preliminary Presentation: Thomas Allin House, 20 Lincoln Ave, Barrington

Dr. Greenwood presented information about the property. The General Thomas Allin House is a 32' x 40', oak-timber-framed, 2½-storey, center-chimney Georgian house, built between 1769 and 1783 by General Thomas Allin (1742-1800). A 20' x 20' two-storey wing on the west end of the house was added about 1857 by General Allin's daughter Elizabeth (Allin)

Bicknell. A shed addition on the north side was probably made in the late nineteenth century and expanded in the early 20th century, enclosing the original north (back) door; a small addition on the east end was made sometime between 1908 and 1924. The roofline on the west-end addition was altered in the 1920s. A new entrance was created in 2010 at the northwest corner of the original house. The house retains much original fabric including parlor and chamber fireplaces, doors and cornice trim, a kitchen fireplace with rear and side bake ovens and much of the original framing. The original five room plan was modified in 1802 to create a two-family house; some but not all of the inserted plank partitions remain. The house sits set back from the road on the top of sloping site kept as a lawn-covered suburban house lot.

The Allin House is one of the few eighteenth-century houses surviving in Barrington, with fine surviving elements of Georgian domestic architecture, and it is associated with two men who were notable at the local and state levels. Its builder, Thomas Allin, a wealthy farmer, was a Revolutionary officer, a long-serving town official, and a member of the Rhode Island General Assembly; in the 1790s he held the rank of Brigadier General as commanding officer of the state's militia system. Thomas W. Bicknell (1834-1925), who lived in and inherited part of the house, was a prolific historian of his native Barrington, and also a well-known educator and educational reformer, who served for a while as Rhode Island's Commissioner of Public Schools and is credited with re-founding the dormant normal school which evolved into Rhode Island College.

Following discussion, on a motion by Dr. Onorato, seconded by Mr. Grosvenor, the Commission

VOTED preliminary approval to nominate the General Thomas Allin House to the National Register.

Preliminary Presentation: Mechanical Fabric Company, 55 Cromwell Street and 55 Sprague Street, Providence

Dr. Greenwood introduced Edward Connors, National Register Consultant, who presented information about the property. The Mechanical Fabric Co. Complex, built between 1891 and ca. 1935, comprises five brick buildings of from one to four stories in height in the Elmwood area of South Providence. This area was first used for steam-powered industrial activity in the mid-19th century by the Sprague textile interests. After the collapse of the Sprague holdings, industrial entrepreneurs developed several properties in the area for machining (Beaman and Smith), printing (Providence Lithograph), and rubber products (Stedman and Fuller and Mechanical Fabric Co.).

The original plant comprised two brick buildings fronting on Sprague Street (Buildings 1 and 2) and a boiler house with a brick stack. By 1894 the company built Building 4, the largest building of the complex along Cromwell Street (number 55). Originally a three-story, pier and spandrel building, Mechanical Fabric added a fourth floor and expanded the footprint of this building several bays by 1921. The fifth and final addition to the complex was a single-story warehouse

(ca. 1910) replacing an earlier frame building. The present complex is essentially the same as existed in the mid-1930s.

The property is significant as an example of the success and diversification of the rubber industry in Providence in the years after Goodyear's original vulcanization patents expired (ca. 1865). While rubber boots, raincoats and medical supplies had been manufactured in Providence and Woonsocket, Stedman and Fuller (1886) and Mechanical Fabric Company provided card clothing to textile manufacturers. Stedman and Fuller relocated to South Providence in 1886 from Lawrence, MA. Five years later Fuller established the Mechanical Fabric Co. in 1891 as a manufacturer of "card clothing," a rubber-based material into which was inserted the fine metal teeth required for carding of wool or cotton. Mechanical Fabric was established by George O. Fuller (1827-1899) of Stedman and Fuller; its general manager was son-in-law Arthur L. Kelley. In 1891 Mechanical Fabric simultaneously began the manufacture of card clothing and pneumatic tires for bicycles under the Dunlop patent. Soon this technology was applied to automobile tires, rubber hose, rubber thread and inflatable cushions of various types. The company stayed in operation until 1939. Occupied for a time in the 1940s by Rau Fastener (Charles Perkins Buildings, NR-listed), the buildings have housed various industrial tenants since that time. Josef Creations, a costume jewelry manufacturer established by Josef Impagliazzo in 1941, removed its operations to Building 4 (55 Cromwell Street) in 1965 and continues operations there today. Building 3 houses FS Industries, a manufacturer of structural steel assemblies.

Mechanical Fabric Co. is also significant under as a fine example of the brick, multi-story, steam-powered industrial plants located in urban Providence in the late 19th century. Despite modest changes made through the first decades of the 20th-century and the insertion of more energy-efficient windows, this complex still reads as a late 19th-century industrial plant. The two long alleys formed between the five buildings create an attractive industrial streetscape formed by similarly-designed brick buildings of various heights.

During discussion, Mr. Sanderson observed that there are four owners of the property, and under the federal regulations for the National Register owners are entitled to notice and an opportunity to object to National Register listing. If a majority of the owners file their objection, the property may not be listed. In the case of four owners, a majority would be three owners who filed objections. Mr. Grosvenor noted that the factory complex appears to be generally well-preserved and certainly seems significant. On a motion by Mr. Grosvenor, seconded by Dr. Onorato, the Commission

VOTED preliminary approval to nominate the Mechanical Fabric Company Complex to the National Register.

5. Loan Report: 33 Stimson Avenue, Providence

Mr. Goff, Loan Committee Chair, reported on the ongoing discussions with the owner of 33

Stimson Avenue regarding repayment of the historic preservation loan. The original note was \$200,000 for a term of five years, with quarterly interest payments and a balloon repayment of principal at the end of the term. In fact, the interest payments are current, but the balloon payment due on March 15, 2012 has not been made, and the owner has requested a five-year extension of the loan. Mr. Goff and RIHPHC staff Sharon Allison have met and discussed the situation with the borrower, who proposed to refinance the first mortgage (held by the bank), make a partial principal payment to RIHPHC, and establish a schedule of principal and interest payments to RIHPHC in order to retire the entire loan balance by March 15, 2017.

During discussion, Mr. Goff observed that extending the loan is not ideal, but the borrower has made the required interest payments and the RIHPHC loan is well secured by equity in the real estate. On a motion by Mr. Goff, seconded by Mr. Cusack, the Commission

VOTED to approve an extension of the loan for five years with the conditions described by Mr. Goff.

6. Other business

There was no other business.

7. Next meeting date: Wednesday December 12, 2012.

8. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 11:20 A.M.

Minutes recorded by,



Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director