



Fall/Winter  
2017/2018

# Wentworth Lear News

## From the Board

The decision to initiate the process of deaccessioning the Tobias Lear house is without question the most momentous event in the seventy-seven-year history of the Association. Details on it are set forth below, but I want to make a few essential points in connection with it.

First, and most important, it is the conviction of the majority of the Board that deaccession represents the best way of preserving the house in perpetuity. Far from "losing" it, as some fear, we believe that if ownership is transferred to a thoroughly-vetted, preservation-minded buyer with strong preservation easements in place, the house will be properly maintained in essentially its present form into the distant future.

It goes without saying that until the proper purchase terms are established and impregnable stewardship conditions crafted, there will be no sale. Thus the process may take considerable time.

## LCHIP - Complete

In 2016, the Wentworth Lear Historic Houses Association received a \$24,090 grant from the New Hampshire Land and Community Heritage Investment Program (LCHIP) with matching support provided by WLHH. The goal of the LCHIP grant was to repair interior and exterior features of the Wentworth Gardner House.

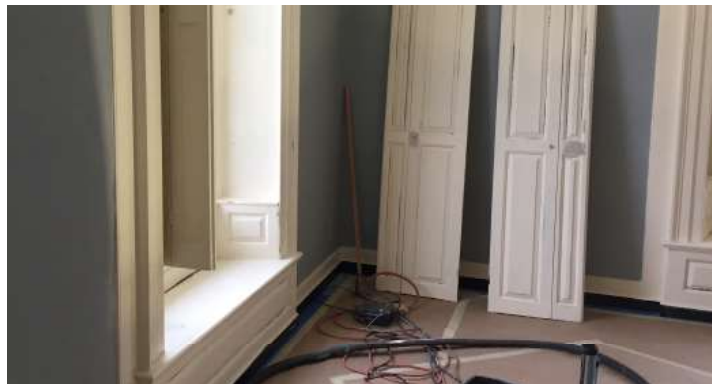
Those of us on the Board take our fiduciary responsibilities very seriously and want you to know that there will be no "fire sale." We are prepared to devote as much time as it takes to do it right.

Richard Adams, *President*



*Annual Meeting, TYCO Center, Strawberry Banke*

We were able to repair and paint twenty-four interior windows and functional decorative features, including sash, frames, mullions, glazing, cornices, raised panels, trim and shutters, as well as ceilings in the second floor rooms. Exterior work included pointing and repairing the foundation and adjacent stonework.



# Participating in the Past (PIP) & Lost Portsmouth

The 2017 season kicked off with a Mother's Day chamber concert held in the south parlor of the Wentworth Gardner house. In July, singer/storyteller "Ramblin' Richard" regaled a capacity audience in the Warehouse with stories and music from World War II.

The May chamber concert had been so well received that the same musical group was invited back in September, this time to play before a capacity audience in the Warehouse.

A very well-received exhibit entitled "Lost Portsmouth" was mounted in the south parlor from June until the house closing in October. Focusing on the vast changes that have taken place in the city's historic house landscape in relatively recent decades, it graphically displayed in before-and-after form photographs of notable properties that no longer exist and what has replaced them.



## Treasurer's Report

WLHH continued to be in sound financial condition at the end of the fiscal year which closed on September 30, 2017. Operating income for the year was a record high of \$52,107. This was due primarily to strong membership support as members made their annual membership contributions and again when they donated to the annual fund. Operating expenses for the year were \$32,893. Expenses were kept below the budgeted amount by carefully monitoring every expenditure to assure that the money was carefully spent. The result was an operating surplus of \$19,214.

Currently there are five funds which contain money that is set aside for special purposes. The funds are non-lapsing i.e., each fund continues from year-to-year until such time that the fund is totally expended or is otherwise dissolved. Four of the funds are for restoration work on the buildings; the fifth is for historic preservation activities. All together there is \$132,048 in the funds. WLHH member Dr. Jane Nelson has long been a major contributor to the funds, furthering her long-time interest in preservation and in the initiatives of WLHH.

The Treasurer's Report might not be complete without noting our current cash reserve. At the close of the fiscal year there was \$193,427 in our bank account. Of this amount \$132,048 is allocated to the five funds as discussed above. The remaining \$61,379 is the unallocated balance - or cash reserve. It is considered prudent to keep this amount in reserve in view of the unknown expenses that could arise as planning for the future of the Tobias Lear House comes to fruition.

Fred Engelbach, *Treasurer*

## Kathleen Boduch

Kathleen Boduch is a neighbor of the Wentworth Gardner and Tobias Lear houses, having rehabilitated a house on Hunking Street four years ago.

In addition to serving on the Board of Directors of the Wentworth Lear Historic Houses, Kathleen is a member of the Board of the Friends of the South End; is a volunteer at Gather, the seacoast food pantry; and has volunteered at the Strawberry Banke Museum.

She and her husband Stan have lived in Portsmouth since 2006, having moved from Chicago. Prior to that, she spent many years in Kingston, NY, where she was a secondary school educator and active area volunteer.



# The Decision to Deaccession and Sell the Tobias Lear House

In November of 2016, a committee was created to study feasibility uses of the Lear House. This committee included representatives from Portsmouth institutions, New Hampshire commissions and historians, as well as two WGTLLH Board Directors. Four options were explored: maintain the house as a study house; donate it to another non-profit; enter into a long-term lease with the Lessee making necessary improvements; or sell the house with preservation easements in place.

Members of the Wentworth Lear Historic Houses Association met on November 6th, 2017 for the Annual Meeting and voted overwhelmingly to endorse the Board's recommendation to deaccess the Lear House. The Board's first step will be to select a preservation easement holder, whose function will be to guide the Board through the process of crafting a preservation easement, vetting and selecting a buyer, and then ensuring that the terms of the easement are upheld in perpetuity.

*What is an easement?*

A preservation easement is a legal agreement used to protect significant architectural features on a property. It is a legal document that is recorded along with local land records giving the easement holder (a preservation organization) rights to and responsibilities for the perpetual protection of the structure. With the assistance of a professional organization like Historic New England, protective easements can be drafted to ensure that the house will not be significantly altered, both inside and out.



The Tobias Lear House

*What will come of the profits from the sale?*

First, a portion of the sale will go towards the easement program development. In addition to application fees, part of the easement process includes establishing an endowment fund with the preservation organization with which it is preserved. Stewardship going forward is provided by the organization selected to oversee the established easements.

The sale of the Lear House will also provide a substantial endowment fund for the Wentworth Gardner House and the Warehouse. It will enable this and future boards to maintain the properties at a very high level and make improvements to their function in new and interesting ways.

*How long will this process take?*

This process will not happen overnight. It may take years. In addition to carefully writing these easements with a preservation organization, there is a vetting process for finding a qualified buyer willing to adhere to these easement requirements.

## House Manager Introduction

Wentworth Lear Historic Houses is pleased to announce the hiring of Jen King as the new House Manager and Caretaker. King earned both a BA in Art History and an MA in History and Museum Studies from the University of New Hampshire, having graduated just last December. In 2014, King was the Data, Membership, and Operations Coordinator at the Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum in New Bedford, Massachusetts. Responsible for day-to-day operations and volunteer management, she also has held positions in historical research, exhibition design, and collections management. She has interned and worked at several museums throughout New England, including the UNH Museum of Art, the American Independence Museum, and Historic New England.

"I am thrilled to be a part of WLHHA. Since guiding in 2016 and indexing institutional archives this past summer, I have grown very fond of this South End gem and I look forward to taking good care of it," says King. Her responsibilities include membership development, programming and exhibitions, and administration.





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Thank you for your continued support of the  
Wentworth Gardner & Tobias Lear Historic Houses!