

Spring 2020



Message from the President

Now that the sale of the Lear house is behind us, we are going to focus our efforts on addressing outstanding maintenance concerns related to the Wentworth-Gardner house and the Warehouse. Some of these matters were identified many years ago in a very comprehensive Historic Structures Report compiled by the Boston firm of Ann Beha Associates, Inc. House Manager Jen Widmark has begun the painstaking task of determining which maintenance shortcomings remain uncompleted. While some are obvious through visual inspection, many are not, an example being flashing around the roof dormers. By combing through minutes and other records dating back twenty-five and more years ago, interviews with tradesmen and past Board members, and discussions with previous house managers, Jen will provide us with much-needed guidance on how to proceed. In the end, it will be our goal to put our priceless structures in first-class condition.



Summer Exhibition

The year's exhibit "Repurposing Portsmouth" will serve as a counterpoint to our 2017 exhibit "Lost Portsmouth," which detailed the regrettable loss of so many historic buildings, many in the name of urban renewal.



In the upcoming exhibit we will illustrate through text and photographs noteworthy examples of structures that were *not* demolished in the name of "progress," but were instead preserved and continue to exist, generally serving other uses than those for which they were originally intended. (An example of such is found in our back yard, with the rehabilitation of the 1740 Lear house, soon to open as a boutique inn.)

Programs & Events

- **Monday, May 25th**
Opening Day Wentworth-Gardner House
- **Thursday, May 28th** at 5:30 p.m.
Members' Opening Reception
- **Saturday, June 6th** at 3 p.m. –
South Cemetery Tour with Richard Adams
- **Wednesday, July 29th** at 2 p.m.
"Thomas Wentworth: What can we discover" lecture by Sandra Rux
- **Saturday, August 22nd** at 3 p.m.
North Cemetery Tour with Richard Adams
- **Date and time TBD**
Noree Chamber Group
- **September 24th, 25th, 26th
& October 1st, 2nd, and 3rd**
"The Book of Will" Production by Seven Stages Shakespeare Co.

A note on COVID-19
Shortly before this issue went to press government-mandated curtailment of most public activity has resulted in uncertainty as to our ability to carry out the above-listed programs and events. We will keep our website updated as changes unfold.

Treasurer's Report

The Wentworth-Gardner Historic House Association continues to be on a sound financial footing. Our fiscal year started on October 1, 2019 with an approved Operating Budget of \$46,000. As we approach mid-point in the fiscal year, operating income stands at \$19,800 and operating expense stands at \$12,200. Because the major part of our financial activity occurs during the months of May through September, it is too early to

forecast where we will be at the end of the fiscal year. However, because both income and expense are within budget planning, we expect to end the year in the black. Much will depend on membership receipts in May and June – which provide one-third of our annual operating income. Readers of the Newsletter may recall that the Association has several Funds that are set aside for special purposes. Presently these Funds, amounting to \$84,000, are

the Wentworth-Gardner Building Maintenance Fund, the Warehouse Building Maintenance Fund, and the Jane Nelson Historic Preservation Fund. The latter Fund is of special significance because Dr. Jane Nelson has made generous donations which help in preserving our two historic buildings and which help the Association carry out programs and activities that encourage the engagement of area residents in historic preservation.

Curatorial Internship

The Wentworth-Gardner house established a new internship for a college-level student interested in pursuing a career in museums or historic preservation. This internship is a revised attempt of last year's effort to establish a high school internship.

After reviewing the position, it was determined that seeking a collegiate intern will be the most likely path to a successful result.

The collegiate intern will receive a generous stipend at the end of the summer. Duties will include: cataloging and identifying museum

collections under the tutelage of the House Manager; identifying the inventories of early inhabitants of the house; working as a museum guide; and writing 1-3 blog entries for our website.

This internship is made possible by a generous gift from Jane Nelson.

New to Our Collection



Pair of chairs, Newport, 1760s and Portsmouth, 1770s
Gift of Sandra Rux.



Sheraton bed, New Hampshire,
1810-1820
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Amos Hostetter.

Buildings & Grounds Report, Kelly Davis

Work on the Wentworth-Gardner and warehouse buildings and grounds continues to be a main focus of the Board of Directors.

Exterior Signs

A new outside hanging sign is in place and will be left in place year-round. As well, a new, portable A-frame sign board is ready to be placed near the bridge to Peirce Island, directing traffic towards the Wentworth-Gardner house.

Warehouse

The Building Committee has been tasked with consulting with a dendrochronologist for the purpose of accurately dating the warehouse.

A dendrochronology study of the warehouse consists of obtaining wood samples of various parts of the building to try to ascertain its

age, changes in how it was used over the years, and alterations, if any. Usually 10-15 samples of qualified wood species are obtained and matched against an existing regional database.

There is a possibility that even after all criteria are met that the results will be inconclusive, but we are optimistic that we will more precisely date the warehouse through this process. Our samples will be retained and stored at Historic Deerfield for future researchers. This study is funded through the Jane Nelson Fund.

As noted in a previous newsletter, the new electric service line from the Wentworth-Gardner House to the warehouse will be installed this spring. An archeology study has been completed and subcontractors are lined up to start work.



Gardner Street

The Board reached out to the City of Portsmouth DPW to reconstruct a portion of the Gardner Street sidewalk and curbing, adjacent to the House Manager's apartment wing. Water has been making its way into the basement, and the City has agreed to reconstruct the sidewalk to divert flow away from the building.

Continuing Projects

The front elevation of the Wentworth-Gardner House is scheduled to be painted by historic painter Tim Berry this spring.

The landscape subcommittee continues to develop a masterplan for the grounds and has scheduled a meeting with our landscape consultant.



House Manager's Report, Jen Widmark

Membership is more important now than ever before. One of my goals when I began as house manager in 2017 was to increase membership. We are fortunate to have remained steady with a few new members, but my goal remains unrealized. So what's left to do? Keep trying! Keep asking! Keep inviting friends, neighbors, and

curious strangers to the house for tours, to the warehouse for programs, to stay in touch and to become members if not already, or to renew when solicited!

I love the Wentworth-Gardner house and historic warehouse. Your membership shows me that you do too.

With your 2020 membership renewal, I hope that you can help me to share our historic structures. Make sure you visit—see what's new and bring your friends. I look forward to seeing you all this summer.

Your neighbor,

Jen Widmark
House Manager & Caretaker





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Historic House Association

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Return Service Requested

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Enclosed is: \$ _____ for 2020 Membership Personal _____ Business _____

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