

## **Historical Commission**

### **Annual Report 2019**

Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 40 Section 8D states a city or town may establish a local historical commission for the preservation, protection and development of the historic or archeological assets of such city or town.

The Historical Commission reviewed the results of the Historic Assets Surveys conducted in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018. Over two hundred (200) buildings were included in the surveys and it was determined that twenty-eight (28) homes and one (1) commercial building in Sturbridge deserve a Preservation Award. The decision was based on suggestions from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and the Professional Archeological Laboratories who conducted the surveys. It was their suggestion that these buildings be studied for more detailed histories. Each owner will be recognized by the Historical Commission for actively or passively preserving the original character of their building. They will receive an attractive plaque which may be placed on the exterior of their building. Presentation of the awards will take place in 2020.

Both of the above surveys are on the Town's webpage under the Historical Commission heading. The Historical Commission is extremely grateful to Jean Bubon, Town Planner, and Jenne Lacy, Administrative Assistant, who integrated the two surveys into one easy-to-use format.

The Historic Assets Surveys reflect only a portion of the historic assets in Sturbridge. Future surveys will reveal more buildings, areas, objects, burial grounds, structures, bridges, and parks and landscapes in Sturbridge that need to be researched, documented, and recognized for preservation. Anyone who has a documented history in any of the above categories is encouraged to contact the Historical Commission. The Commission will make certain the original documents or copies are archived and made available for future research and surveys.

For the past two years the Historical Commission advocated for installation of storm windows for the Center Office Building and the Town Hall. Storm windows will contribute to the preservation of the restored windows in the buildings, energy efficiency, and comfort for employees and visitors. The project is now under the capable coordination of the Facilities Coordinator, Robyn Chrabasz.

The Historical Commission advocated for signs at the Old Burial Ground and the North Cemetery to discourage visitors from gravestone rubbing and other activities that have defaced or destroyed gravestones in our cemeteries in the past and threaten further damage if continued. The attractive signs are installed. They inform visitors of the types of activities that will damage gravestones and they set guidelines for their preservation as determined by professionals in the field of gravestone studies and restoration.

We want to recognize and thank a special volunteer whose effort added an enormous asset to the written history of Sturbridge. Bill Barnsely spent one and a half years meticulously documenting the graves in the Old Burial Ground. The result is a ring-bound book with names and dates categorized alphabetically, chronologically, and by family names with the gravestones or burial locations (if gravestones are missing) mapped out in the book and on a rollout map. The

information is available at the Joshua Hyde Library as a reference for people who are working on genealogy and for people who want to know more about Sturbridge history.

The Sturbridge Historical Commission continues to strive to highlight historic assets in Sturbridge and to advocate for their preservation. Historic preservation contributes to our community's economy and to our sense of place. We appreciate all of the help and encouragement we have received throughout the year and all the people who support our mission.

The Sturbridge Historical Commission is a five-member board. We welcome anyone interested in local history to join us at our meetings. We also welcome anyone who would like to become an "associate" member of the Commission.

Respectfully Submitted,

Barbara A. Search, Chair (2021)  
Richard Volpe, Vice Chair (2021)  
Cathy Zavistoski, Clerk (2022)  
Bailey Applegate (2022)  
Charles Blanchard ( 2022)