

Historical Commission

Annual Report 2020

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 recognized thirty (30) homes and buildings during a presentation at the November 16, 2020 Board of Selectmen's meeting. A framed Certificate of Appreciation was awarded to Bill Barnsley for his work documenting the gravestones in the Old Burial Ground. He categorized the gravestones both alphabetically and chronologically by family names and dates, and he mapped the burial locations. A ring-bound book and a large map with the information he gathered are available for public access at the Joshua Hyde Library. Bob Briere was presented a framed plaque at the Board of Selectman's meeting on December 7, 2020 in recognition of his lifelong interest in researching and sharing Sturbridge history and for founding the Sturbridge Historical Society.

The homes and buildings were selected for awards from the FY 2017 and FY 2018 surveys conducted by The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and Professional Archeological Laboratories, respectively, as potential nominees for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). It should be noted that there are other buildings and homes eligible for nomination to NRHP in Sturbridge, and that those recognized and recommended are those from the two surveys.

The following were given Preservation Awards: The Eli and Mary Marsh House, 12 Champeaux Rd., The Samuel, Jr. and Mary Morse House, 47 Farquhar Rd., The Samuel and Lucy Hobbs House, 23 Hall Rd., The Snellville District #2 Schoolhouse, 480 Main St., The Otis Block/Blackington Building, 572 Main St., The John Smith House and Barn, 138 McGilpin Rd., The George J. and Delina D. Cloutier House, 13 Podunk Rd., The Jonas Bemis/Silverberg Family House and Barn, 248 & 251 Podunk Rd., The Hamilton Woolen Co. House and Barn, 210 Shepherd Rd., The Fiskdale Mill Agent's Residence, 11 Summit Ave., The Deacon Daniel Plimpton House, 307 Main St., The Haynes Side-Hill Barn, 307 Main St., The Haynes Family House, 307 Main St., The Haynes Carriage & Paint Shop, 307 Main St., The Haynes Harness & Blacksmith Shop, 315 Main St., The Deacon Zenas Dunton House and Barn, 5 Haynes St., The Joseph Marsh House, 142 Brookfield Rd., The Eliab and Fanny Marsh House, 213 Brookfield Rd., The Josiah Fiske House, 530 Main St., The James Johnson Double House, 533-535 Main St., The Sturbridge Cotton Mills Office, 541 Main St., The Fiskdale Lower Mill, 559 Main St., The Alpheus Wight House, 420 Main St., The Winthrop Wight House, 420 Main St., The Daniel Wight House and Barn, 472 Main St., The Martin L. Phillips House and Barn, 468 Main St., The John and Lizzie Hooker House and Barn, 473 Main St., The George E. Richards House and Barn, 407 Main St.

A separate Preservation Award was given in recognition of The Abner Allen House, 3 Old Stagecoach Rd. for the meticulous restoration of the façade after a fire destroyed the house in 2006.. The Publick House received a Preservation Award for saving an important historical asset in Sturbridge by moving the Chamberlain Grain and Feed Barn to another location on their property.

The results of both surveys are available on the Town of Sturbridge website under the Historical Commission. There are over two hundred surveys which include photos, architectural details of the facade, a historical narrative, and a bibliography and/or references for each building.

The Sturbridge Historical Commission is grateful to the people who contributed to the history of Sturbridge by preserving the buildings they own and to those who have contributed to preserving history through their actions in recording and sharing Sturbridge history. The Historical Commission continues to strive to highlight historic assets in Sturbridge and to advocate for their preservation. Historical 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 check the Town Calendar for meeting announcements and join us for our online meetings during the Covid-19 Pandemic and in person when it is allowed. Please contact the Selectmen's Office to receive a GOTOMEETING link if you want to join us online. 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)