

**AGENDA
HERITAGE COMMISSION
FEBRUARY 12, 2020**

**AGENDA ITEM #6A
OTHER BUISINESS**

QUARTERLY REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

Lebanon Heritage Commission

Quarterly Report Presented to the Lebanon City Council, 22 January 2020

Robert L. Welsch, Chair

During the late Fall and early Winter the Heritage Commission has been resolving issues from the past year and planning for our upcoming celebration of Black History Month (in February).

Regulatory Matters

Although we dealt with a number of regulatory matters in the Historic District earlier this past year, we have not had any significant new matters since we approved the plans for renovation/restoration of City Hall.

The Planning Board has taken up matters concerning two historic properties that the Chair has weighed in on. One is the C. C. Benton House at 10 Bank Street. Benton was one of the first Historians in Lebanon and wrote numerous articles for the early newspapers in the town, particularly the Granite State Free Press. His writings are one of three early sources of the City's history. Part of his home, which like so many other houses in nineteenth century Lebanon had been moved from other sites, formerly sat on site of the current Carter House. The current owner would like to demolish this structure that Robert Leavitt (late city historian) put on the List of Lebanon Landmark properties. Members of the Heritage Commission feel that this property should be restored rather than demolished. We feel that the consultant's report does not entirely and accurately represent the state of the structure. He suggests that the structure is unsound, unworthy of restoration, and unsafe for habitation. We question this conclusion since the current and past owners have had four families renting space in the house for the past decade up to the present time. The report also diminishes the significance of Benton's role in Lebanon's history.

Colby C. Benton was a noted geologist in the early nineteenth century, known for his collection of minerals from all over the Upper Valley. Benton was married in 1819 to Susan Ann Parkhurst, the daughter of Phineas Parkhurst, Lebanon's first doctor and an early resident of the Dana House in West Lebanon. In 1822 Benton was a member of the Franklin Lodge of Masons in Lebanon along with Ammi Burnham Young (the famous federal government architect), A. Bugbee, and A. Baker. In 1832 Benton was Adjutant for Lebanon's Militia unit (the 33d Regiment). The Benton House on Bank Street is one of the oldest surviving houses on Bank Street, and it is one of the oldest surviving houses in downtown Lebanon. Its value to the City merits its renovation rather than its demolition.

The other property before the Planning Board that attracted the interest of the Heritage Commission was the house and fields formerly owned by Thomas Penneck of East Lebanon (Mascoma village). This 200-acre lot with house and barn were formerly owned by Penneck, a freed slave who was a member of a black military unit during the Civil War under the command of Lebanon resident Col. Slayton. Slayton's family homestead was east of downtown, memorialized by the present Slayton Hill Road. Although Col. Slayton moved west, he

encouraged one of his men, Penneck, to settle in Lebanon, where he was successful and ultimately owned this large lot in East Lebanon, just north of the highway and east of General Paine's property. Although the Chair of Heritage was well aware of Penneck's life and contributions to Lebanon, he was unaware of the location of Penneck's lot. We understand that the current plan is not to demolish the nineteenth century house, but merely to subdivide the lot. Learning of this property and its association with Penneck led to the Commission to consider celebrating Black History month in February, an event that has taken up much of the Commission's work since early December.

Grant Applications

The Commission has notified the NH Department of Historic Resources that we will submit an application for a CLG grant this year. If we receive some funding we plan to hire a consultant to reassess the Historic District and update documentation on the various properties around the Green, currently in the Lebanon Historic District as recognized by the Department of the Interior. Five structures in the District were not identified as contributing structures when the District was established in 1986 because they were not at least 50 years old. These are the Mascoma Bank Building, Lucky's Garage, the Post Office, the Fire Station, and the Bandstand in Colburn Park. All five are now old enough to be contributing properties and we want to place all of these in contributing status. In addition, we want our consultants to help us determine whether the District should be extended down Campbell Street (west of Lucky's Garage and the Churchill House, both of which are currently in the District) to include other historic structures such as the CCB and the Senior Center, formerly one of Lebanon's first supermarkets.

Dana House Working Group

Competition for the LCHIP funds this year were much stiffer than in the past and we were unsuccessful in our effort in this area. Nevertheless, Council has approved a Capital Reserve Fund (CRF) to support work this year on reroofing the historic structure's cedar shake shingles and the more typical modern shingles on the newer Annex. City Manager and the Head of DPW have been in discussion with the Chair and Planning Office staff about ways to proceed on this project which we hope will begin later this year when the weather gets better.

The Chair and Vice Chair (Mimi Hains) visited the Webster Cottage to see how another small house museum is organized. It was useful to discuss the Cottage with Cyndy Bittinger of Hanover, who chairs the Hanover Historical Society. Ms. Bittingers showed us around the Cottage and discussed with us some of their issues. The Cottage is only slightly bigger than the Dana House and is thus comparable to Dana House in several ways, even though it is and from a somewhat later period. As a part of Dartmouth College, but managed by the Hanover Historical Society, the Cottage has few financial concerns compared with Dana House, but it does share some issues with Dana House in how often it is open to the public. We are working toward having the house open on a schedule that is comparable to Webster Cottage. I want to note that like Dana House, Webster Cottage was moved to its current location. The Cottage formerly sat on the Dartmouth Green and one other site before reaching its current location.

In 2034 Dana House will have been on its current location for fifty years and thus eligible to be on the National Register of Historic Places at its current location. It was placed on the State Register of Historic Places more than a decade ago, because the state does not follow the same restrictions as the National Register.

Fountain Working Group

The Fountain Working Group completed the concrete pour for the basin of the fountain in Glenwood Cemetery. We anticipate that the water connection and the solar power connection will be completed in the Spring. Once complete, we are planning for an official recognition of the opening of the fountain and an official (ceremonial) handover of the Glenwood Fountain to the City. For insurance purposes, the fountain became the property of the City in the Fall of 2019, but the Fountain Working Group will continue to manage whatever work remains, in consultation with the Public Works Department, the Sexton, and the Cemetery Trustees.

Special Projects Working Group

The major work of the Special Projects Working Group has been in two areas: (a) establishing a 501(c)3 Friends of Lebanon Heritage and Arts, and (b) preparations for a celebration of Black History in Lebanon.

Vice-Chair Mimi Hains has identified a lawyer who can help us organize and establish a “Friends of Lebanon Heritage and Arts” that can receive tax deductible donations for projects involving Lebanon’s arts and heritage. We hope this “friends” group can serve the needs of the Lebanon Historical Society and the Arts and Culture Commission in addition to the Heritage Commission. (This would also include the Fountain Working Group for any future fountain projects.)

Black History Month Celebration

With the help of Celeste Pfeiffer at the Lebanon Public Library and Breanna Glover, the City’s Diversity Intern and student at Dartmouth, we are preparing for a celebration of Black History in Lebanon, concentrating on what is known of runaway slaves passing through Lebanon before the Civil War and Thomas Penneck (noted above). Members of the Council will be invited to Kilton Library for this celebration on Saturday 22 February.

We intend to list three properties associated with Black History on the Landmark Property List, two of these were associated with the underground railroad and runaway slaves, and the third with a freed slave and successful farmer.