

Report of the Historical Commission (2024)

The Historical Commission regularly meets on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 7:00 p.m. at the Senior Center, all are welcome. Members: Co-Chairs – Jeanne Johnson and Cher Hamilton; Vice-Chair-Paul Russell; Treasurer – Annmarie Fontecchio; Isabel Nulter; Sheila Dubrawski.

Notices of Intent to Demolish Structures 75 or More Years Old

Notices of intent were filed to demolish a garage at 192 Main Street (May 28, 2024); structures at 19 Populatic Street (town well site) (June 24, 2024); and the houses and structures at 47, 49, and 55 Milford Street (August 1, 2024). After meetings and discussion of their history and locations, they were deemed not historically significant to Medway's history.

Historically significant sites and resources in Medway

The Commission, working with Medway Historical Society, was able to obtain a determination from the Massachusetts Historical Commission that the Ide House is eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Commission received a request from the owner of 197 Main Street, the former Torrent fire house, to make some renovations to the building, including roof replacement, painting, repairs to the fire hose tower, and replacement of windows. Due to an historical preservation restriction on this property, approval of the Historical Commission was required for certain of the renovations. After careful consideration, the Commission approved all of the requested renovations except the window replacement, which it deemed would significantly detract from the historical integrity of the building. It agreed to work with the applicant to repair and restore the existing, original windows.

Cemeteries

The 2023 Town Meeting appropriated \$60,000.00 in Community Preservation funds for restoration of historical gravestones in the Evergreen and Oakland Cemeteries. The Town entered into grant agreements with the owners of the cemeteries, and we hope that the restoration work will be completed in 2025. This is the third phase of gravestone restoration in the Evergreen Cemetery, and the first phase in the Oakland Cemetery. The Evergreen Cemetery is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Plaques/Signs for Historic Buildings and Sites

Informational signs for the Ide House, Garnsey House foundation, High Street School (now the Medway Public Library) and West Medway Train Station (site is now Police Station) have been installed. These signs are installed near sidewalks and provide historical information on the sites. They are the result of much research by Commission members, particularly Annmarie Fontecchio and Isabel Nulter. The Medway Historical Society was also instrumental in providing information and photographs. We extend our thanks to all who assisted. The Commission is currently researching additional sites in town for more historical signs. Owners of historic homes may order house plaques through the Medway Historical Society.

Local Historic District

We are considering the formation of a Local Historic District comprised of selected houses in the Rabbit Hill National Historic District. A survey was mailed to all homeowners in the district to gauge interest in establishing a Local Historic District, under which the Town Meeting could enact a bylaw imposing certain restrictions on exterior changes to the buildings in the district. The Commission sent out 54 surveys and received 18 responses; of those, 8 were generally in favor of establishing a district, 5 were opposed, and two were uncertain. Many respondents offered comments as to areas that they felt an historic district should not regulate, such as storm windows and doors, paint color, accessory buildings, general upkeep, windows. The Commission appreciates all of the comments and will be reviewing possible approaches. Any action will require the Select Board to appoint a study committee and the study committee will solicit additional public input.

Other Projects

Digitizing Photographs from Historical Commission files in Town Hall basement

This project was completed by photographer Tim Rice, we thank him for his valuable assistance.

Facebook Page (Medway, Massachusetts Historical Commission)

We continue to contribute to and monitor our page and invite everyone to join the page.

Future Consideration

- Evergreen Cemetery—signs; repair tombstones
- Oakland Cemetery—tombstone repairs; begin process for nomination to Historic Register
- Having the portrait of Sanford cleaned (currently displayed at Town Hall)
- Partial excavation of Garnsey House foundation if Mass Historical sanctions this
- Compiling a booklet of historic parts of Evergreen Cemetery
- Creating a book of photos from Medway's collection of about 150 glass images, which Mr. Russell has digitized, giving more people the opportunity to see them
- Arranging for the preservation of more historic town records.

We thank all members of the Historical Commission for their service to the Town on this Commission.

Respectfully submitted,
Jeanne Johnson, Co-Chair
Cher Hamilton, Co-Chair