



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
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MINUTES

RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION
May 12, 2010

I. MEMBERS PRESENT

Mr. Robert E. Cusack
Mr. Michael Hebert, NR Review Board
Mr. Karst Hoogeboom
Dr. Ronald Onorato
Dr. Patricia Rubertone
Mr. Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director, representing Mr. Williamson

STAFF PRESENT

Dr. Richard Greenwood, Deputy Director
Ms. Mercedes Monteiro, National Register Assistant - Heritage Aide

GUESTS

Ms. Adriana Thomas, House Policy Office
Clarkson Collins, South Kingstown Land Trust
Claudia Swain, South Kingstown Land Trust
Katherine Long, South Kingstown Land Trust
Madis Suvari, Owner, David S. Baker House

MEMBERS ABSENT

Dr. Michael Sullivan, Director DEM
Mr. Robert Goff
Mr. John Grosvenor, AIA
Ms. Patrice O'Malley Hagan
John P. Leyden, State Building Commissioner
Dr. Patrick Malone
Dr. E. Pierre Morenon
Mr. Jared L. Rhodes, Chief of Statewide Planning representing Kevin Flynn, Asso. Dir
Mr. J. Michael Saul, Interim Executive Director, EDC
1 Vacant

II. AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The meeting was convened at 9:35 A.M. In the absence of Mr. Williamson, Mr. Hoozeboom assumed the Chair.

2. Minutes of February 10, 2010

On a motion by Dr. Onorato, seconded by Mr. Cusack, the Commission unanimously VOTED to approve the Minutes of February 10, 2010.

3. Director's Report

a) State historic preservation tax credits totaled \$13 million in 2009; an additional \$90 million in tax credits is under contract but the projects have not been completed. In 2008 the total of completed projects was \$30 million, and in 2010 \$51 million are scheduled. However, in the current distressed economy, financing for development projects is very difficult, and delays from established development schedules are anticipated. The total investment for completed State historic rehabilitation projects since 2002 is \$931.6 million, and an additional \$807.4 million is under contract.

b) The Salt Pond Archaeological site (RI 110) continues to occupy RIHPHC staff attention. In March, the Federal District Court dismissed the Owner's lawsuit against RIHPHC and other State officials; the decision has been appealed. The CRMC began evidentiary hearings on the matter May 13, and the second hearing is scheduled for June 17. RIHPHC is represented by the Office of the State Attorney General. Hearings are expected to continue through the summer. The Salt Pond Site was the subject of a New York Times article on April 6.

c) Four training workshops for appointed members of local historic district commissions are scheduled for May and June as part of a "Preservation Is Local" grant from the RIHPHC. Commission staff are participating as instructors.

d) The Ocean House Hotel in Watch Hill has been reconstructed to replicate the historic building, and it will re-open on May 20. RIHPHC staff actively participated in the design process for assuring an accurate reconstruction after it was determined that the original structure would be replaced.

4. National Register of Historic Places

Final Approval: Pocasset Mill, Johnston

Dr. Greenwood presented information about the property. The Pocasset Worsted Company Mill in the Town of Johnston, Rhode Island is composed primarily of three connected

heavy timber-framed brick buildings, one- to three-stories high, which form a roughly U-shaped configuration that contains a central courtyard currently used for parking. The complex was developed between 1897 and 1902. The Pocasset Worsted Company in the village of Thornton was Johnston's largest employer in the early 20th century. The mill produced a variety of worsted yarns that were sold to other mills in New England and New York for weaving and knitting purposes. It was one of three mills in the village associated with Charles Fletcher (1839-1907), a prominent Providence textile manufacturer, who was one of the founders of the American Woolen Company. The mill complex is representative of the mill structures built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries throughout New England and retains many original exterior and interior elements.

Dr. Greenwood reported that Dr. Patrick Malone has read and approved of the nomination, although he was unable to attend today's Commission meeting. Following discussion, on a motion by Dr. Onorato, seconded by Mr. Hebert, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to approve the National Register nomination for Pocasset Mill.

Preliminary Consideration: Biscuit City Archaeological District, South Kingstown

Dr. Greenwood presented information about the property. The Biscuit City area today is owned and preserved by the South Kingstown Land Trust. In the 18th century the area was referred to as the "Great Spring" for the spring-fed pond here. It is believed the area was utilized by Narragansett Indians before 1636. A house was recorded here in 1739, and by the 1780s and 1790s there were references to a mill pond and grist mill. In the 19th century a water-powered mill was used for carriage and wagon making and woodworking. By the 1830s 80 people lived and worked in Biscuit City, including African-Americans (and possibly Native Americans) who worshipped at the "Colored Church" marked on a late 19th-century map. Today the surviving historical features at Biscuit City include a dam, mill foundation and water-wheel pit, the cellar hole to the miller's house, a root cellar, and the stonewall-lined Biscuit City road. There has been no significant site disturbance, and other features may be identified by future investigation.

Clark Collins, representing the South Kingstown Land Trust, stated there is strong local interest in the property's historical associations and use of public walking trails.

Following discussion, on a motion by Dr. Rubertone, seconded by Dr. Onorato, the Commission unanimously

VOTED preliminary approval for Biscuit City Archaeological District.

Preliminary Consideration: Cedar Spring Farm/David Sherman Baker, Jr. Historic District, 51 and 67 Prospect Avenue, North Kingstown

Dr. Greenwood presented information about the property. The historic resource comprises two historic houses, 51 Prospect Avenue and 67 Prospect Avenue. The National Register Review

Board previously considered these properties in 2007 as a potential amendment to an expansion of the Wickford Historic District. At that time, the owner of 67 Prospect was altering and gutting the building. A new owner acquired 67 Prospect in 2009; he has completed some exterior and interior renovation work, including retention of the interior plan and architectural trim.

The properties were owned by David Sherman Baker, Jr. and family descendants from 1883 until 1946. David Baker was a native of Wickford, US Attorney for Rhode Island and candidate for governor. 51 Prospect was built about 1883; it is a 1 ½-story villa with mansard roof and a veranda that encircles the dwelling on all four sides, and simple, intact historic interior. The site includes a carriage house and specimen trees enclosed by stone walls. About 1885, the second house was built on the property; it is a 2 ½-story mansard house with a three-story tower and some mid-twentieth-century alterations. The last owner had begun renovations and alterations to the house, including removal of interior plaster. The current owner has retained some alterations, adding support columns on the front porch to support an earlier second-story expansion,

and used historic photographs to guide completion of some renovations; interior trim has been preserved and most of the original interior partitions remain. The Baker Family acquired surrounding acreage and operated a working farm until 1946. Subsequently, the land was divided into house lots.

Although no longer in a rural context, the Cedar Farm property and its two Baker Family houses retain historic character. The property appears to meet National Register criteria for its association with David Sherman Baker, Jr. and the development of Wickford (criterion "A") and for historic architecture (Criterion "C").

Following discussion, on a motion by Dr. Onorato, seconded by Mr. Hebert, the Commission unanimously

VOTED to preliminary approval for Cedar Spring Farm/David Sherman Baker, Jr. Historic District, 51 and 67 Prospect Avenue, North Kingstown.

5. Other Business

There was no other business.

6. Next meeting date: Wednesday June 9, 2010.

7. Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 11:20 A.M.

Minutes recorded by,

Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director