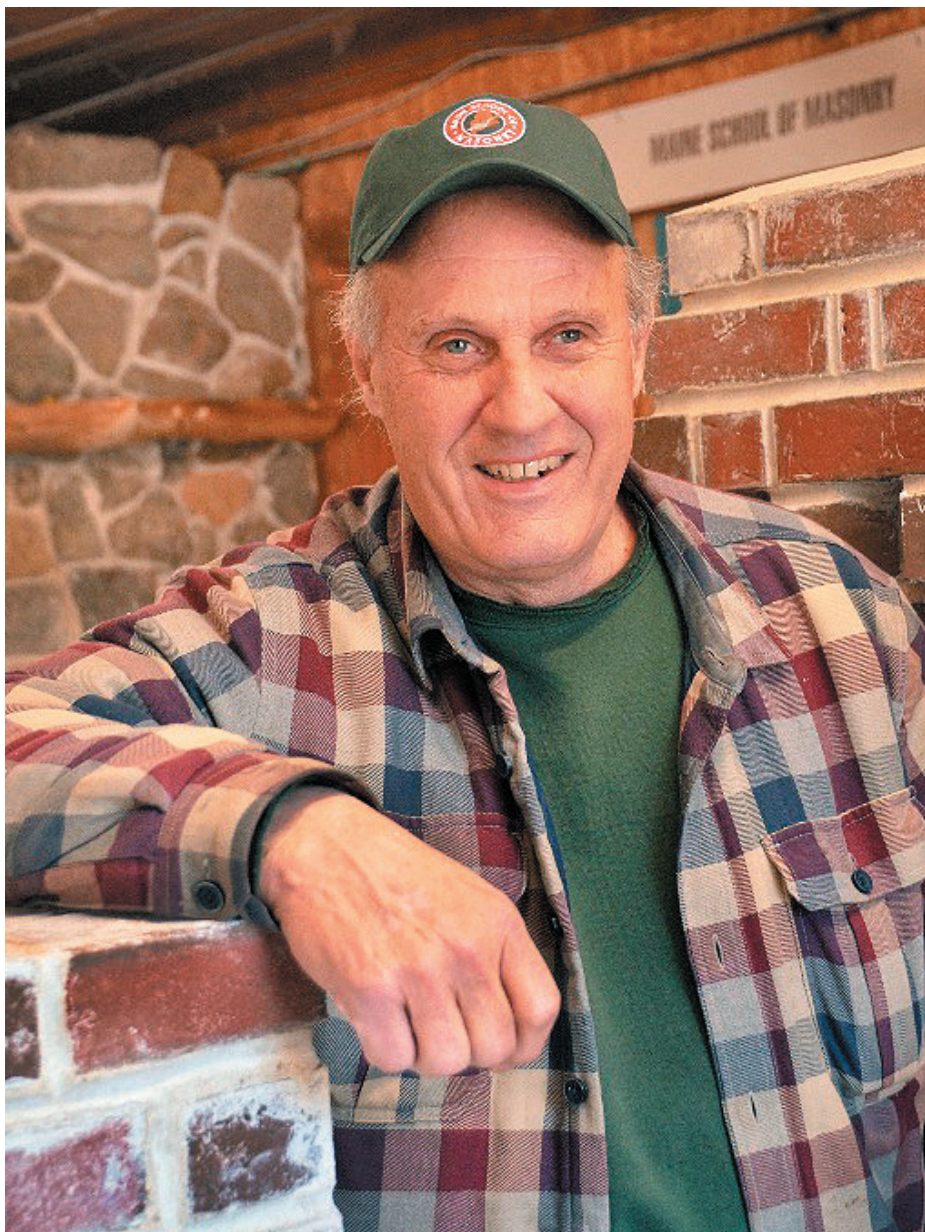


LANDMARKS OBSERVER

Historic character enriches our lives



THE MAINE SCHOOL OF MASONRY
SEE PAGE 4



LOOKING BACK AT
THE OBSERVATORY
RESTORATION

SEE PAGE 8



WHO WE ARE:
Jessica MilNeil

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LETTER FROM SARAH HANSEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SPRING IS FINALLY HERE, and with it a sense of renewed purpose! In this issue of the *Observer*, we focus on the preservation trades, and their critical importance. Restoration and rehabilitation work on historic buildings requires specialized training, including knowledge of materials and systems of construction. We are thrilled to be able to highlight the amazing work of the Maine School of Masonry, and reflect on the extraordinary restoration team that worked on the Portland Observatory. While we are lucky here in Maine to have extraordinarily talented preservation practitioners, all of us are acutely aware of the need to increase training opportunities in the preservation trades, and we look forward to exploring ways to support and enhance preservation training here in Maine.

According to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), 81% of construction firms are



Executive Director Sarah Hansen working on site in the historic ghost town of Dearfield, Colorado, a designated Homestead National Historical Park. Dearfield was an African American dryland farming community founded by Oliver Toussaint Jackson in 1910. At its peak the community may have had as many as 300 residents, but by 1946 the town's population had fallen to one.

reporting challenges in filling specialized positions. "Traditional trades are critically important to preserving the heritage and continued use of our historic built environment for future generations," ACHP Chairman Aimee Jorjani said. "It is more important than ever, with the Great American Outdoors Act that is now law as well as the pandemic's impact on employment, to increase the number of skilled craftspeople in traditional trades. These are skills that can be added to those currently in the construction field or for those interested in pursuing creative and skilled hands-on preservation work."

Need some help finding skilled practitioners for your project? Check out our Northern New England Preservation Directory on our website, where we list experts focusing on historic building rehabilitation and restoration: portlandlandmarks.org/preservationdirectory.

See you at the Observatory this summer!

Greater Portland Landmarks



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ADVOCACY UPDATE BY JULIE LARRY

D ID YOU KNOW THAT the boundaries of Portland's Waterfront Historic District (sometimes locally called the Old Port district) were expanded this winter at the request of a property owner? The Portland Waterfront Historic District was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on May 2, 1974 for its significance at the local level in the areas of Architecture, Commerce, Transportation, and Urban Planning. In 1984, two additional properties were added to the 67 contributing properties, and the boundary was expanded at both the east and west ends of the district. In 2012, the boundaries were again increased to include two additional buildings and one wharf on the south side of Commercial Street. This allowed for the rehabilitation of the former Twitchell Champlin Building (1884-1924) on Merrill's Wharf.



The Twitchell Champlin Building (now Pierce Atwood)



113-115 Middle Street in 1924 (City of Portland tax photo) and today.



This winter, the National Parks Service once again increased the boundaries of the Waterfront Historic District to include one additional commercial building on Middle Street that was built in 1914 during the district's period of significance (c.1790 to 1936.) 113-115 Middle Street is contiguous to the existing district, is significant in the areas of Commerce and Architecture, and was determined to have the necessary integrity to contribute to the district. The Middle Street building's owner plans a project that will be financed in part using Historic Tax Credits.

Additions to a historic district are not unusual. A few months after the passage of the



Apartment Building at 96 Federal Street before and after restoration.

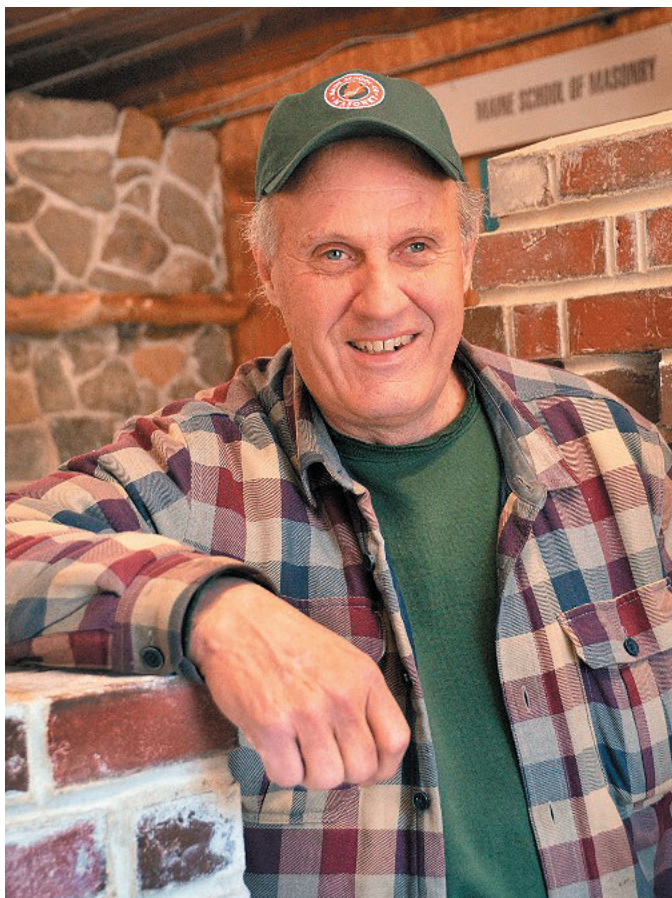
India Street Historic District, the district was expanded at the request of a property owner on Federal Street. The expansion allowed a structural- and safety-deficient six-unit apartment building to be rehabilitated using Historic Tax Credits.

Munjoy Hill Historic District Passes!

O N APRIL 12, THE PORTLAND CITY COUNCIL, reversed an earlier decision and approved the new Munjoy Hill Historic District in a 5-4 vote. Thank you to all the City Councilors for their thoughtful deliberations, to all of those who participated in the three-year process, and to the many people who spoke or wrote in support of the district in the final push to the district's designation. We especially want to thank the Munjoy Hill Neighborhood Organization and city planning staff. Their cooperation, communication, and perseverance has created a multi-faceted policy to guide change on the Hill that will preserve the best of the past and accommodate the needs of the future.

The City Council also approved a resolution to study the impacts of Portland's historic districts. We support the study and the opportunity to collect data and evaluate the impact of historic preservation in Portland. We welcome community discussions about possible changes or additions to the city's historic preservation program and look forward to the report's findings.

Thank you again to all involved in the process!



Stephen D. Mitchell, known as "Mitch".

THE MAINE SCHOOL OF MASONRY:

One man's calling to save the art of fine masonry

BY KATE BURCH

Stephen D. Mitchell, founder of the Maine School of Masonry, is a mason with a mission: to spread this historic art to the next generation. Mitchell, known as "Mitch", has had a long career as a mason, but he was always interested in teaching. In high school, he thought he wanted to become a physical education teacher until he realized traditional college education wasn't for him.

THE SON OF AN INDUSTRIAL arts teacher, Mitch grew up helping his father in the shop. "I knew I was good with my hands from working with my father," he explained when we talked on the phone, but when thinking about a career, "I knew if I went into carpentry he'd be around and he'd be bugging the crap out of me." Mitch found a description of the masonry program in the Northern Maine Technical College (now Northern Maine Community College) catalogue and was intrigued. "I asked my father what he thought about masonry and he said 'I don't know anything about it.' When he said that I knew that was it."

After graduating from the program in 1973, Mitch completed a two-year apprenticeship and then started his own business. He had plenty of work, but after years in the industry and what he calls "a life changing experience", he realized he wanted to do more with masonry than just the work itself.

In 1980, he moved to the Midwest to start a program in carpentry and masonry at a school for young men with troubled pasts. He and his 100 students salvaged materials from demolished buildings and re-use them, creating new dormitories, a learning center, and a church on the school property. "Amazing what you can do with a hundred people,"

Mitch notes. He saw the way that his students grew when they learned a skill that they could take with them, and how it helped them stay out of trouble in the future – and discovered his true calling in trades education.

Mitch got married and moved back to Maine, where he worked on trades programs in different public schools. They were all short-lived. He started a masonry program at Southern Maine Technical College (now Southern Maine Community College), but that too lasted only 3 years, a victim of state budget cuts. Mitch went back to working as a contractor until he was inspired to start the Maine School of Masonry in 2005. The school is the country's only private, non-profit masonry school, offering a 9-month program where students are trained in topics including brick wall construction, stone laying, block wall construction, and masonry restoration.

FOR DECADES, THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASING NEED for masons – as in other trades, professionals are retiring at a much faster rate than they are being replaced. There is such demand for masons in Maine that Mitch can place every one of his students with a job while they are in school. Masonry, Mitch explained, used to be "a handed down trade through generations. Your grandfather was a mason,



A Maine School of Masonry student.

so you'd be a mason. But that stopped in the 1930s, 1940s, 1950s when there were more opportunities in colleges and schools to become something else." More recently, a declining investment in career technical programs in schools has exacerbated the shortage.

Though COVID-19 has forced a pause, Mitch typically spends a lot of time visiting schools and career fairs, trying to recruit the next generation of masons. It's not easy. "Students aren't trained to work with their hands as much as they were 40, 50 years ago. So they look at hands-on work as work." Mitch believes the best time to introduce young people to trades is when they are in elementary or middle school. "They find it a lot of fun, where the [high school] juniors and seniors find masonry to be more work."

Exposing younger kids to the trades through simple projects teaches them the satisfaction of working with their hands. For them, Mitch explains, it's fun to learn to build things, and "the word 'work' isn't part of it." Mitch likes to share the importance of masons with first graders: masons build chimneys, and you need chimneys for Santa. When children have a positive experience learning how to build things, they'll remember it, because it's so different from the rest of their education, and it lays the foundation to later see the trades as a career option.

He always has a pitch to encourage young people to enter the masonry trade. For years, he focused on explaining that it was an art, or telling them how much money they'd make.



Masonry students work on the Kennebec Arsenal.

"Now, I let them know that they're wanted." There is such a huge demand for new masons that he can guarantee their work will be needed – plus, it's something different. "When you go home for Christmas and people know you're going to school to become a mason, I guarantee that they're going to want to talk to you about masonry more than they want to talk to your cousin who's going to school to become a doctor."

Mitch has trained 5 female masons at his school, and he tries to encourage more women to enter the field because it's an advantage to do something different. "Put that you're a woman mason on the side of your truck," Mitch tells them, and people will already be interested in hiring you.

MITCH HAS A REAL PASSION FOR HISTORIC MASONRY

"My love is restoration. I love old buildings, I love the art and the skill in the old brick and stone buildings. It's something that we don't build anymore, and we don't even have the skill to do it if we wanted to." He started a historic restoration program for graduates of the masonry program at his school.

The students in the program learn on the job. Mitch knows that plenty of local historical societies and churches with old masonry buildings can't afford to have them repaired to state and federal standards for historic preservation. It's these buildings that he's most concerned about – not National Register properties, but local landmarks in communities that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



Maine School of Masonry students work to restore Fort Knox on the Penobscot River.

THE SCHOOL OF MASONRY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

don't have the resources to save them. So he brought his restoration program students to these buildings to fix them for free. Since piloting the program, though, he hasn't had the demand for students. "I'm having so much trouble trying to find masons. I can't fill my classes with people to learn new construction stuff. How are we going to get people to get turned on to restoration?"

Still, he's hopeful about the future of the trade. The coronavirus pandemic has hugely increased the demand for building trades, and Mitch believes that demand is helping to encourage people to go into the trades. He's working on projects to advance the field, like testing cutting methods that produce less silicates with OSHA, and he talks of eventually retiring when someone else can take over the school and incorporate more technology. Of course, when he retires, he still plans to spend his time going out into schools to share the art of masonry with young people.

Mitch has worked on some incredible buildings, like the Kennebec Arsenal and Maine's Fort Knox, but his favorite part of his long career is seeing the success of his students. He loves to see former students able to support their families with the trade they learned. He believes that learning a trade can have a deep impact on peoples' lives, whether they are students at the Maine School of Masonry or among the many underprivileged kids he's taught over the years. "It's an art," he says, "and when somebody has that art – and they didn't know before that they had that art– it's amazing. It's a life-changing experience." ■



Masonry graduate Chandler Ellis.



Restoration student Felix Pease.



Students on site repointing the barracks at the Kennebec Arsenal.

Mitch is always looking for masons - If you know anyone who's sitting around on the couch with nothing to do, he says, send them his way! You can find more information at masonryschool.org

Abyssinian Meeting House Restoration

THE CUMMINGS FAMILY have been boldly leading the effort to restore the Abyssinian Meeting House for more than 20 years:

Leonard and Mary Jane Cummings, their daughters Pam Cummings and Deborah Khadraoui, and now their granddaughter Anisa Khadraoui. At our Annual Meeting in December, Landmarks presented a special Preservation Award to the Cummings Family in recognition of their amazing perseverance, dedication, and determination in restoring the Abyssinian Meeting House. For this special Preservation Award, Portland artist Daniel Minter created a sculpture for the family called *Phoenix Rising* made from a beam salvaged from the Abyssinian during the restoration.



Daniel Minter at work on his sculpture for the Cummings Family.

Following last year's Black Lives Matter protests, the Committee to Restore the Abyssinian received more than \$375,000 in donations, far exceed-



A member of Richard Irons' masonry crew works on the brick restoration.

ing previous annual fundraising. Work continues on the restoration – new windows were recently installed, and the masonry repointing was completed.

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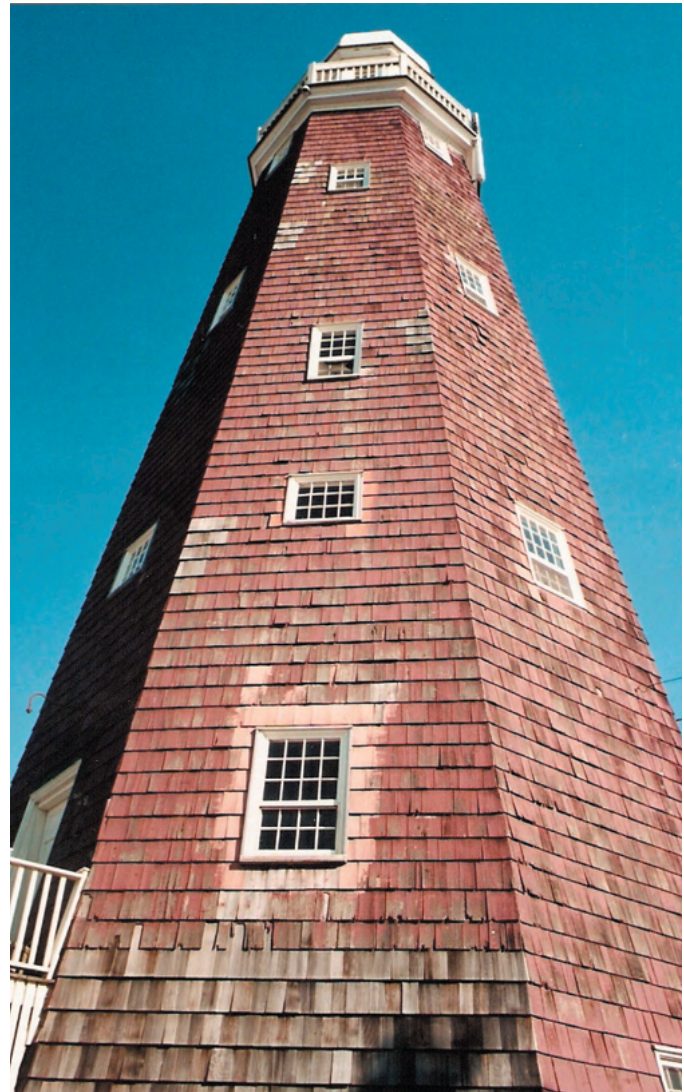
LOOKING BACK AT THE OBS

BY ALESSA WYLIE

THE PORTLAND OBSERVATORY is one of the most recognizable buildings on the Portland skyline. But 20 years ago, this beloved landmark was in danger of being permanently closed. It took some amazing preservation trades work and the combined support of Landmarks, the City of Portland, the Munjoy Hill Neighborhood Organization, the Portland Marine Society, and individual donors to complete the tower's complex restoration. **Hilary Basset, former Executive Director of Greater Portland Landmarks**, was instrumental to the success of the project and we asked her to share some memories of the two-year endeavor.



Hilary: The project required that all the sheathing and components of timber frame be examined and rated for reuse, repair and/or replacement. The shingles were removed. The sheathing boards under the shingles were carefully labeled, removed, and laid out in a warehouse for close-up study. And each element of the timber frame was studied closely, so a treatment could be recommended.



Hilary: It is hard to believe that in the late 1990s the Observatory had sustained so much water infiltration and powder post beetle damage that it was at risk of literally falling over. The shingles had taken a beating; there was a large area on the first floor where water would collect; and beetles had been munching on structural timbers. As an immediate triage, the City closed the building to the public and wired it together to reinforce the structure while developing a plan for how best to repair the tower. We were worried that the whole building might have to be dismantled and where to find tall eastern white pine trees in case the eight corner posts had to be replaced. Fortunately, after consulting many local and regional experts, researchers concluded that the corner posts were sound, but most of the rest of the building needed urgent attention.

“The restoration of the Portland Observatory was a wonderful collaboration where people shared their expertise, generosity and enthusiasm for preservation and local history to benefit the entire community.” – **Hilary Bassett**

OBSERVATORY RESTORATION



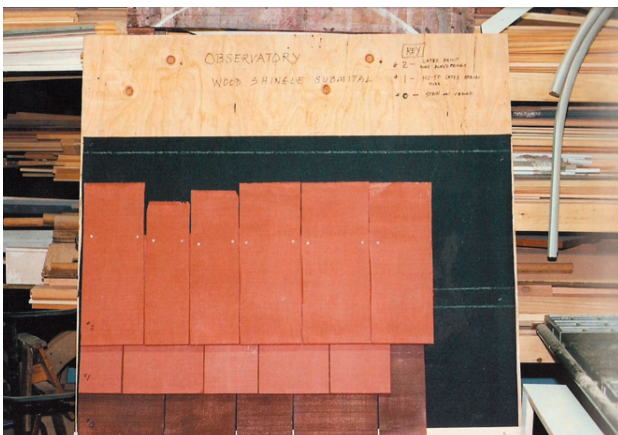
Hilary: I remember going over to the tower when the contractors had just scaffolded the exterior of the building in December 1998. It was very strange to walk into and around the tower when the scaffolding was up and all the shingles and sheathing had been removed. You could see the whole timber



frame structure and see through the frame to views of the City and Portland Harbor. While the work was going on, the Observatory was surrounded by the scaffold covered in black netting, with the lantern sitting nearby on the ground. Portland's skyline looked very different in 1998-2000!



Hilary: The removal of the Lantern was very dramatic: it has footings on the 6th level, so a large crane had to lift it up and out, and then lower it slowly to the ground so the crew could work on it safely. When the work was completed, the lantern was lifted and its footings aligned so it could be placed back on top.



Hilary: Over 18 months, the building was restored using as much original material as possible. The original paint colors were discovered from an old shingle preserved around 1900. New strapping and waterproofing over the timber frame was installed to protect the building from water. New windows and new flagpoles were installed, and the lantern replaced at the top with a new painted canvas roof. The old railing at the deck, which was not original, was replaced with a new, higher railing so that visitors could feel more secure.

WHO WE ARE: Jessica MilNeil

HOW DID YOU GET INTERESTED IN THE PRESERVATION TRADES?

Jessica: I've always really liked to use my hands and to make things that are functional. When I was younger I thought I wanted to be an artist. After college, I was working for the Appalachian Mountain Club in the White Mountains of New Hampshire and I joined the construction crew because they were very funny. I was working on a renovation of a hut on Mount Washington and I thought, "I could do carpentry every day." I went to the North Bennett Street School for Preservation Carpentry – mostly because I wouldn't have gotten into the furniture program. That was where I discovered a love for old buildings.

I don't think of myself as a "preservation person", I'm not aesthetically more inclined towards old buildings. I love old buildings because I love the craftsmanship, I love the stories, I love investigating all the parts and pieces, and the feeling of communing with the carpenters who built the building, based on figuring out how they made it. I feel



Jessica onsite at the Foley-French Barn.

with Preservation Timber Framing the next year and that is the exact steeple I worked on first. It really felt magical.

I've worked for Preservation Timber Framing since 2008. For the first half of my time there I worked mostly in the field doing timber frame repair on steeples, primarily, as well as some barn and house dismantling, and historic barn repair. Now, I do building assessments. I go to a barn or a church and I spend a lot of time climbing around in the dirt in the undercarriage, or going up into the attic or the steeple and sitting in bat guano, taking pictures of the frame and documenting it. Then I go home and draw it. I write up a report that describes the historic significance, determining the major changes in the building based on the technologies used, and then I write a step-by-step repair plan for the building.

DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE PART OF TIMBER FRAME BUILDINGS?

Jessica: I really love crabs. In a steeple, the crab is a horizontal element at the top of a tower or belfry frame that looks like a spider and provides a base for the spire rafters to sit on. The spire is usually 4-sided or 8-sided, and the crab has to connect 4 or 8 tower posts across the space horizontally and support those rafters. They always look

really cool and they're always really idiosyncratic. There weren't really builder's guides for them, so it's fun to see how each 19th century builder solved this problem. The crab can also tell you that maybe the same carpenter worked on a different steeple down the street, because they are so specific. They're really beautiful, if you're someone who thinks that radial geometry is beautiful – and I think a lot of us do.

HOW DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED IN LANDMARKS?

Jessica: First of all, I have always been a huge fan of the Observatory. When I was at NBSS and I was learning to date buildings, my husband and I would walk around the West End and he would quiz me using the Landmarks markers as a flashcard. That's how I was first introduced. More recently, I met Sarah Hansen through my boss, Arron Sturgis. She reached out to me and we had a few meetings and she asked me to join the Board.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRESERVATION IN PORTLAND AND ISSUES OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION?

Jessica: I've been pleased since joining Landmarks to find how forward-thinking the staff is about examining whose history we are preserving. I don't think preservation as an industry has historically done a good job of being inclusive – white history has been elevated and preserved, while the deep and rich history of the people of color who built Portland, and indigenous history, have been obscured.

Preservation and historic districts have at times conflicted with the development of affordable housing, but they don't have to be in conflict. I'm glad that Landmarks pays real attention to issues of housing demand and affordability in Portland. I absolutely care about the original old buildings of Portland and I want them preserved, but it is imperative to address the incredible inequity in our society at the same time. ■



A crab in a steeple in Benton Falls.

like I am in the head of all the different carpenters who worked on the building, generation after generation.

TELL US ABOUT YOUR CAREER AS A PRESERVATION CARPENTER.

Jessica: Before I went to North Bennett Street School I was working at Rosemont, driving up to Yarmouth to make deliveries, and there was a steeple in town. I remember knowing I was going to school and seeing that steeple and thinking, "Someday, that's what I'm gonna do." I did an internship



Beautifully Restored Historic Italianate Building

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The Morrill Mansion (c.1850) is a fully restored B & B in the West End that features 8 gorgeously appointed guest rooms, each with their own beautiful bath. Completely furnished, this B & B offers a gracious common entry, a nicely decorated common dining room, and fully-applianced kitchen. The attention to every detail is the secret to its success, year-after-year. This property is framed with striking landscaping, and its own paver stone parking lot. The Morrill Mansion ensues many possibilites and is one of Portland's special historic beauties. \$1,850,000



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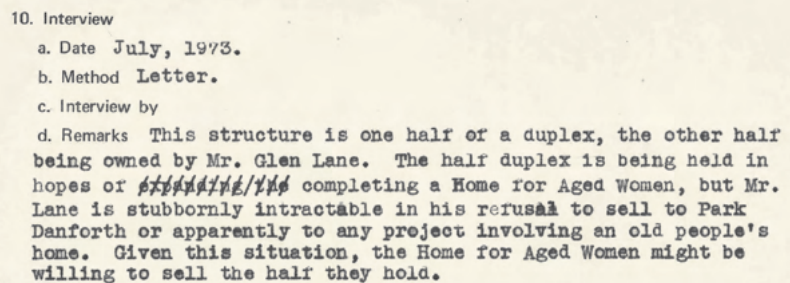
The Tangled Tales of Two Historic Homes

BY KATE BURCH

Since 1975, Landmarks' Historic Marker Program has provided a way for homeowners to show pride in their historic houses. To order a marker, homeowners submit their findings or request that Landmarks staff complete the research. Researching an old home often produces a straightforward list of deeds and occupants, but a building's past can also reveal more complex – and sometimes confusing! – stories of families, businesses, and community connections, as in these two properties that recently received markers.

James Appleton Block Portland, 1848

When we got the request to research this brick duplex on State Street it seemed easy – it has long been included in some of our walking tours as the James Appleton House, home of a Maine state representative and gubernatorial candidate who advocated for abolition and was called “the father of prohibition”. The house was surveyed by Landmarks in 1975 by Earle Shettleworth Jr., one of Landmarks' founders and Maine State Historian.



10. Interview
a. Date July, 1973.
b. Method Letter.
c. Interview by
d. Remarks This structure is one half of a duplex, the other half being owned by Mr. Glen Lane. The half duplex is being held in hopes of ~~completing a Home for Aged Women~~ completing a Home for Aged Women, but Mr. Lane is stubbornly intractable in his refusal to sell to Park Danforth or apparently to any project involving an old people's home. Given this situation, the Home for Aged Women might be willing to sell the half they hold.

Earle Shettleworth's survey card.

Once we began to dig deeper into the history, we found a whole slew of Appletons in the mid-19th century in Portland who worked as silversmiths and watchmakers, and we began to wonder if our walking tours were correct. It took detective work with historic maps, census records, and a historical directory of American silversmiths to figure it out.

Though he was more famous for his political career, we discovered that General James Appleton Sr. (1785-1862), for whom the house is named, was also a trained silversmith and watchmaker – and it was as a craftsman that he appeared in Portland city directories. His son, James Appleton Jr., also a silversmith and watchmaker, actually came to Portland first and opened a shop on Middle Street. After his father moved to Portland in 1833, the two went into business together. A younger Appleton son, Daniel Fuller Appleton, joined his father and brother in 1840 to apprentice at the shop. Daniel went on to become a prominent watchmaker in New York City and was also an abolitionist who served in politics.

In 1848, James Jr. acquired an empty lot on State Street and constructed a brick duplex in a style popular with Portland's growing middle class. James Jr., James Sr., and their families lived in one half, while James Jr.'s cousin Elisha Appleton lived in the other. All these Appletons occupied the building for a few years, with both sides of the duplex sold independently by 1853.

Once the property was split, each side changed hands more than a dozen times, creating a complex trail of deeds. In 1966, half was owned by the Home for the Aged. The Home attempted to purchase the other half to demolish the building and create a new facility, but the other half's owner, as documented in Earle Shettleworth's survey, refused to sell. Her refusal is likely what saved the building, which today is two private homes.



Interested in purchasing a marker for your historic home? Visit portlandlandmarks.org/historic-marker-program to learn more!

Lewis-Snow House

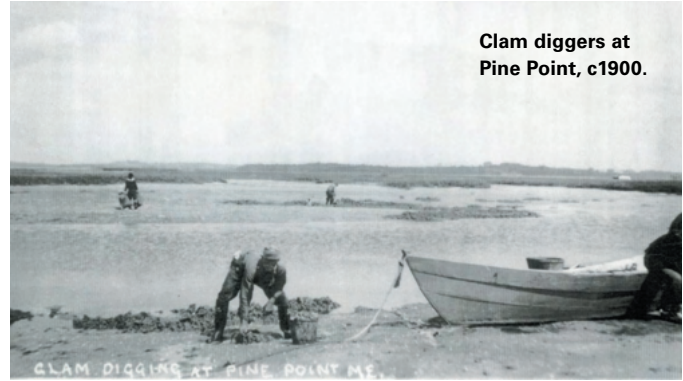
Scarborough, 1870

This research request came with a note that the owners believed the extension connecting this house to its barn had been constructed for shucking clams, and they were correct – this home is part of a long history of the clam industry in Pine Point. The story of this house also revealed that Pine Point in the 19th century had close connections to another fishing community: Provincetown, Massachusetts. Records show families moving between the two places



Lewis-Snow House

and quite a few marriages between Pine Point and Provincetown residents. Isaac Baker, a mariner from Provincetown, acquired the land in Scarborough where this house stands around 1834. Baker's daughter Olive, who grew up in Scarborough, married Isaac Lewis, a seaman from Provincetown.



Clam diggers at Pine Point, c1900.

in-law, and built this home around 1870. He remarried shortly after, but seems to have not taken to farming life, as he and his second wife moved to his hometown of Provincetown in 1875, and he resumed work in the fishing industry.

The house was rented for many years until Harris B. Snow bought it in 1908 (the farmland was sold to another family.) Harris Snow was a fish and clam dealer who lived in Pine Point with his wife Alberta and their children. He was likely related to Isaac Lewis through the Scarborough Snow family. It was Harris who built the extension to accommodate clam shucking. By this time, Pine Point was a regional center for catching and processing clams, with local residents supplying large canneries like Burnham & Morrill. For Snow, clams were the family business - his cousin Fred owned both a restaurant and a cannery, and in the 1930s Snow's Clam Chowder was the best-selling soup of its kind in the country.

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- Legacy Properties Sotheby's International Realty
- LeMessurier Consultants
- Linda Bean's Perfect Maine Lobster
- Maine Dry Stone
- Maine Historic Preservation Commission
- Maine Historical Society
- Maine Home + Design
- Maine Humanities Council
- Maine Irish Heritage Center
- Maine Preservation
- Margaret E. Burnham Charitable Trust
- Masonry Preservation Associates
- M-Co Engineering Plus
- Morin Brick Co.
- Morrison Real Estate
- Morton-Kelly Charitable Trust
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- Papi & Romano Builders, Inc.
- Peter Lord Plaster and Paint, Inc.
- Phineas W. Sprague Memorial Foundation
- Plaster Magic
- Portland Paddle
- Portland Public Library
- Preservation Timber Framing, Inc.
- Red Hook Design, Llc
- Renewal by Andersen
- Restoration Resources
- Resurgence Engineering & Preservation
- Rich Exterior Solutions
- Sash and Solder, LLC
- Semple Architects
- SMRT, Inc.
- StandFast Works Forge
- Stern Consulting International
- Steven Schuyler, Bookseller
- Stone*Henge Restoration, L.L.C.
- Studio E, Inc.
- T.A. Napolitano Electrical Contractor
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Please join other businesses in support of preserving our homes, our neighborhoods, our future! You'll receive a variety of benefits and recognition. Contact Greater Portland Landmarks at 207-774-5561 for more information.

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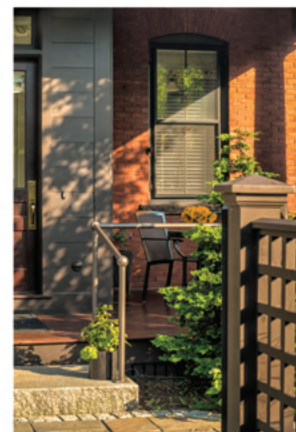
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GRAND REOPENING!

We are thrilled to announce that the Portland Observatory will be opening on June 5th for the 2021 summer season.

Things will look a little different this year, and access to the Observatory will be by pre-purchased, timed tickets. For more information on purchasing tickets, hours of operations, and what to expect when you visit, go to our website: portlandlandmarks.org/observatory



WALKING TOURS

Our walking tours will be returning as well, exploring the India Street, State Street and Western Prom areas of the city. Check out portlandlandmarks.org/tours for the latest information.