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our homes, our neighborhoods, our future

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The tradespeople and preservation experts at the Old House Trade Show can help you enhance and improve your home, and make it more energy efficient.

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The Joys of a Vintage House

LIKE MANY MAINERS I LIVE IN A VINTAGE HOUSE. I enjoy the term “vintage” because it suggests that it is distinctive and has a history, and it does, as a building that just celebrated 100 years. To me, vintage conveys a special origin, along with a layering and acquisition of characteristics from its long experience in the world.

Part of the fun of being in a vintage house is discovering the bits and pieces that tell the story of that experience. In my place it is the lincrusta wall coverings for each room that replicate the fine wood paneling found in a more elaborate house. For example, in the dining room the lincrusta includes a band of berries and acorns, suggesting the harvest – very appropriate for a dining room. I learned that at the Victoria Mansion, which carries that theme over the top. The dining room also has a nozzle from a long defunct gas lighting system. How interesting to have turned on the light from a valve next to the wall.

I also like the fact that there is a Craftsman style overlay to a basically Colonial Revival format – it shows a stylistic transition between two eras that I particularly enjoy. Over the years a number of things have changed. There are few additional doors that weren't there in the beginning, the heating system is different, the paint colors reflect more contemporary tastes, and some of the woodwork that was originally dark brown is now painted white. I think there must have been a day servant who worked there because of the way the doors are organized, but I haven't got the documents to prove it. There is no driveway or garage because there used to be a trolley running down the middle of the street. Just being there makes me think of the 100 years of social and architectural history that a vintage house expresses.

While living in a vintage house can be rewarding, it comes with a unique set of challenges. All of us who live in older houses have war stories – a common one is the search for a mysterious water leak. After a year of frustrating discoveries of water dripping down the wall, we finally discovered the source in the masonry, where the header of an upper floor window had been improperly installed. A bad repair had to be corrected with the help of an expert mason who was familiar with older buildings and had seen this many times before. More enjoyable experiences included refinishing the hardwood floors, repairing damaged plaster walls and ceilings, or my favorite, painting the place. The quality of these projects relied on a knowledgeable group of expert tradespeople who are sensitive to the needs of a vintage house. I came to know many of them – painters, plasterers, masons, carpenters, and others – at the Old House Trade Show.

Over my tenure, I have enjoyed repairing and revitalizing the historic features of my vintage house while contributing new layers to its fascinating story. ■



HILARY BASSETT
Executive Director

PRESERVATION UPDATES

Meet Patricia Long, Landmarks New Director of Development



Patricia Long recently joined Landmarks' staff as Director of Development. She brings extensive experience in fundraising, having served as Director of Development for the Catholic Diocese of Portland, for the Catholic Foundation Maine, and for the Cedars Nursing Care Center. “I've always loved the historic character of Maine, and since I live in a 150 year old farmhouse, I also appreciate

the pleasures and challenges of living in a vintage home. I'm looking forward to meeting all of the generous friends of Landmarks,” says Patricia.

Historic District Being Considered for India Street

On January 20, 2015 the Portland Planning Board recommended India Street Sustainable Neighborhood Plan to the City Council, which cited historic preservation as a major policy component. The Historic Preservation Board has begun to consider the proposed Historic District, which is strongly supported by Landmarks. In March, there will be a workshop to consider the interface of the proposed district and new form-based zoning. For more information, including a history of the India Street Neighborhood, visit www.portlandmaine.gov. For a link to CTN-5's video of architectural historian Julie Larry's presentation about the neighborhood's immigrant history, see www.portlandlandmarks.org.



ST. PETER'S CATHOLIC CHURCH (1929)

Abby Lumsden Enjoyed Giving Tours



Longtime Portland Observatory docent Abby Lumsden passed away in February. “Abby loved giving tours at the Observatory – she was always ready to share her knowledge, help with programs, and have fun, whether it be Flag Day, special tours, or docent gatherings. Even after climbing the stairs became more difficult for her, she stayed involved. We will miss her!” said Jennifer Pollick, Manager of Education Programs.

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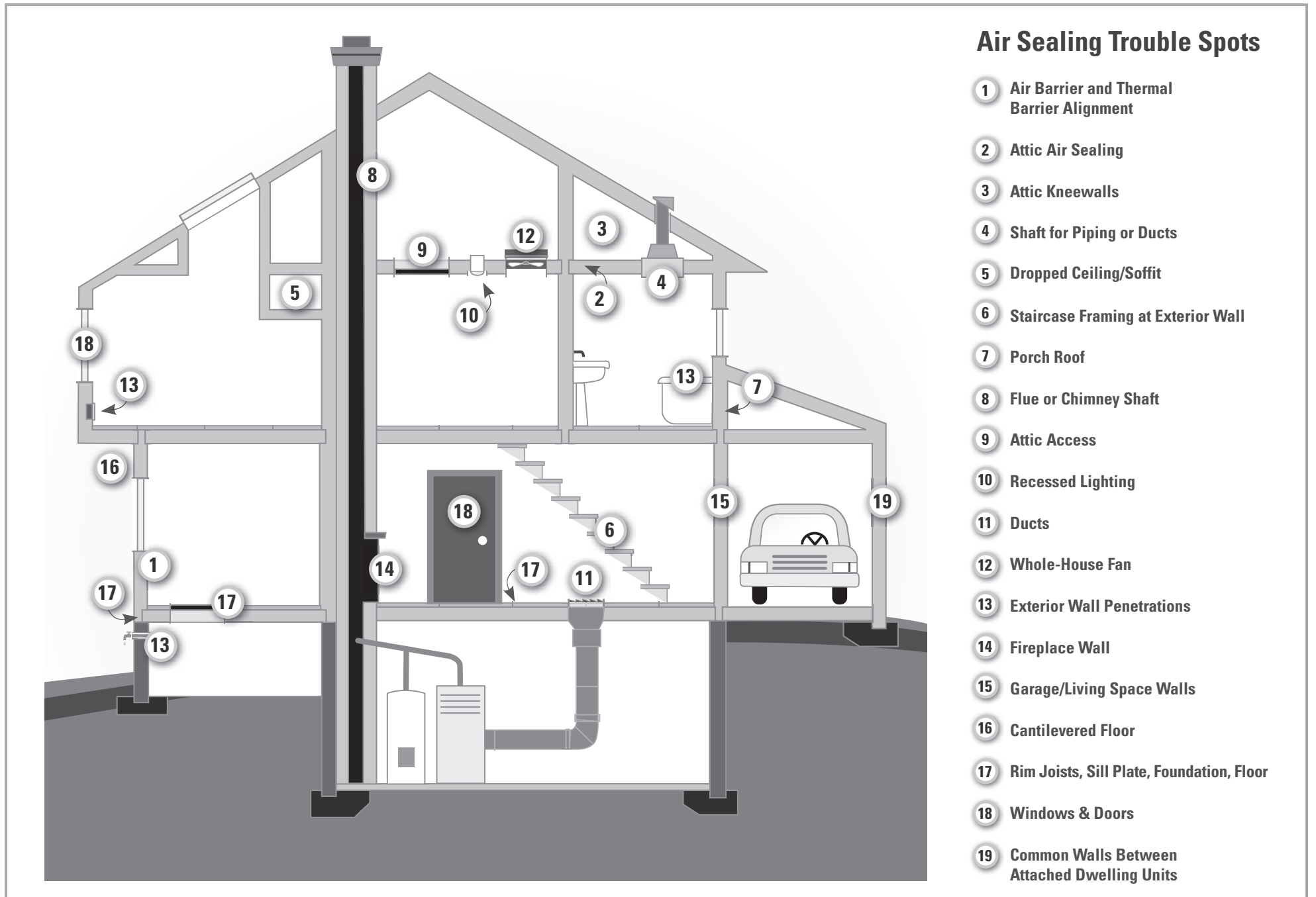
The mission of Greater Portland Landmarks is to preserve and revitalize the architectural fabric, history, and character of Greater Portland—renewing our neighborhoods, spurring economic development, and keeping Portland one of the most livable cities in America.

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TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON

Here are ways to make your older home more comfortable any time of year



Air Sealing Trouble Spots

- 1 Air Barrier and Thermal Barrier Alignment
- 2 Attic Air Sealing
- 3 Attic Kneewalls
- 4 Shaft for Piping or Ducts
- 5 Dropped Ceiling/Soffit
- 6 Staircase Framing at Exterior Wall
- 7 Porch Roof
- 8 Flue or Chimney Shaft
- 9 Attic Access
- 10 Recessed Lighting
- 11 Ducts
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- 17 Rim Joists, Sill Plate, Foundation, Floor
- 18 Windows & Doors
- 19 Common Walls Between Attached Dwelling Units

A guide to the most frequent sites for air leakage. Reprinted with permission from U.S. Department of Energy. Building America Best Practices Series, Vol. 10: Retrofit Techniques and Technologies: Air Sealing A Guide for Contractors to Share with Homeowners (Courtesy: Pacific Northwest National Laboratory & Oak Ridge National Laboratory, 2010).

First address moisture and structural integrity – then seal air leaks to achieve energy efficiency.

Our Maine homes endure a range of temperature and humidity extremes. Although many houses have withstood some 200 years or more of season changes, they still need periodic upkeep. The very idea can be overwhelming, but step one is to inspect the outside of your historic home each year. Is the roof leaking? Does the siding need repair or replacement? Can you see mold or mildew? Is there efflorescence on brick surfaces, peeling paint, or cracked masonry? Are there cracks in the basement walls?

This kind of scrutiny each year, with a particular focus on signs that moisture is getting in or staying in, is the most important way you can protect your home's function, performance, and energy efficiency.

Moisture is often the problem

Energy conservation is key to any building's performance and longevity, and problems often stem from deferred maintenance. Significant areas of heat loss are often clues to moisture-related structural damage. Any structural problems or moisture issues need to be resolved before you embark on energy improvement projects.

Start by looking for moisture – including puddles,

buckled siding, or mildewed clapboards. **Here are some reasons you may find moisture inside your home:**

- High water table in the soil or prolonged periods of high humidity
- No vapor barrier beneath the basement floor
- Inadequate or no exhaust ventilation in the basement, bathroom, or laundry room
- No attic or roof ventilation
- Inadequate air exchange
- Condensation from cold water pipes

And here are some reasons you may find moisture on the outside:

- Leaks in roof, wall, exterior trim, window and doors, or faulty mortar joints
- Blocked gutter systems, downspouts, or leaders
- Poor drainage of the site, including slopes pitched toward, rather than away from, the foundation
- Poorly designed or blocked foundation perimeter drains, or no drains at all
- Exterior foundation walls that are cracked or lack waterproofing

For more ways to find sources of moisture use this checklist from *This Old House*, available at: <http://img2.timeinc.net/toh/static/pdf/fall-checklist.pdf>.

Check your indoor air quality first

Americans spend up to 90% of their time indoors, and much of that indoor air is more polluted than the air outside. The culprit is usually inadequate ventilation. Even houses that have air leaks can have higher than

usual amounts of indoor pollutants, including asbestos, biological pollutants (pets and pests), carbon monoxide, dust, mildew, mold, pesticides, radon, and volatile organic compounds.

Assessing your indoor air quality is an important first step before beginning any energy projects, especially before sealing things up. Walk through your home looking for pollutants. Some, like mold, mildew, asbestos, and volatile organic compounds, can linger in the basement or garage. Exhaust ventilation should be working well in areas with high moisture and pollution, like bathrooms and kitchens. And carbon monoxide detectors help detect and warn you of unhealthy air quality.

The EPA has published a guide to assessing indoor air quality, identifying pollutants, and recommending solutions <http://www.epa.gov/iaq/pubs/careforyourair.html>. If you find mold, asbestos, or other toxins you're not sure how to deal with, it's time to call a professional. The Maine Association of Building Energy Professionals has a listing of indoor air quality technicians at <https://mabep.memberclicks.net>.

Air Sealing

About a third of a home's energy costs come from air leakage, experts say. The good news is that most air sealing can be done by a do-it-yourselfer with a little study and preparation.

Remember your ABCs: Start in the Attic, move to the Basement, then to the Center of the house. This takes

continued on page 4



PHOTO: HEATH PALEY

Greater Portland Landmarks is urging the City to name the Portland Company complex as a historic district

PORTLAND'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION Board has nominated the Portland Company complex for historic district designation, with a first workshop to be held in mid-March. In February, the Planning Board endorsed a zoning change that expands the range of possible uses there to include residential, retail, hotel, and mixed uses. Greater Portland Landmarks believes that the protections afforded by historic district designation are essential to managing change as plans move forward to redevelop the site.

The Portland Company complex is the only relatively

intact 19th century waterfront industrial site surviving on Portland's peninsula. Its landmark quality buildings illustrate the story of 19th century Portland's industrial prowess in both rail and marine transportation, which helped establish Portland's prominence in international business and trade. The whole complex has been determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

In a study commissioned by the City, Sutherland Conservation and Consulting documented the historic significance of the site locally and nationally, and identified

fourteen historic buildings built between the mid-1840s and the 1950s that survive on the 10-acre waterfront site. The Preservation Board will review the Sutherland report findings and a new study of structural integrity of the historic buildings to make its recommendation to the planning board and ultimately the city council.

The Portland Company introduces and defines Portland from the water, and the character of development on the site will have tremendous impact on surrounding neighborhoods and the City as a whole. More information and to get involved: www.portlandlandmarks.org.

Air Sealing

continued from page 3

advantage of the natural physics of heat and air movement. First you'll stop warm air leaking out; next you'll reduce air coming in. The goal is to create a continuous air and thermal barrier for your home.

Effective air sealing targets such places, where the line between inside and outside is broken, and areas where divisions between floors, stories, or rooms are blurred. Draw a sketch of your house. You'll find that some spaces (mudrooms, eaves, and attics) could be considered both "inside" and "outside" areas. Consider the aspects of your house that determine which areas are inside or outside. For example, if the attic floor is insulated, it's a demarcation between the inside and outside. But it may also be penetrated by elements like

a chimney, plumbing vents, or recessed lights.

Your own experience of your home will help you find air leaks. Where do you feel drafts? Where do you see moving cobwebs? Look for dirty patches of insulation, which are good indicators of air leaks. Another way to find leakage is to walk around with a burning stick of incense, following common-sense precautions to prevent fire or burns. The smoke will follow typical patterns of air leakage and movement.

Take your incense and pay particular attention to the places indicated on the illustrative diagram created by the Department of Energy on page 3:

Different types of leaks call for different types of air sealing material — weather-stripping, caulk, backer rod, spray foam. The EPA has a good guide on what works best where http://www.energystar.gov/index.cfm?c=diy.diy_index. Another consideration when choosing your materials is how easily it's installed and

whether it's reversible. Backer rod is easily removed and replaced, as is latex caulk and most types of weather-stripping. Spray foam is permanent, messy, and difficult to remove. Ask yourself, "Will I need to be able to un-do this? Will the next homeowner?"

If you don't want to tackle this yourself, there are many professional air sealing contractors in Maine who can help you. A list can be found at <https://mabep.memberclicks.net>. Be sure to ask contractors for references and for their experience working on older buildings. When deciding upon an air sealing strategy, keep in mind the preservation axiom of reversibility. ■

Excerpted from *The Energy Efficient Old House*, by Anne Stephenson and Christopher W. Closs, edited by Hilary Bassett, and published by Greater Portland Landmarks in 2011. Available in print at Landmarks offices and online at www.portlandlandmarks.org

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House Island's historic immigration station buildings now have historic district protections.

House Island is Portland's newest historic district

The city council unanimously voted Jan. 5 for the designation, which will protect historic resources and bring closer scrutiny to development planned there by new owners.

ALITTLE OVER TWO YEARS after Greater Portland Landmarks named House Island a "Place in Peril," Portland's city council on Jan. 5 named it the city's newest historic district. The council voted unanimously in favor of the designation for the 26-acre Casco Bay island, which was recently purchased and slated for development.

Fort Scammell sits on the island's southern end. It was first used in the War of 1812 to the Civil War and served a defensive military purpose for the city well into the 20th century. The northern end also has an important history. The three residential-scale buildings there were known as "the Ellis Island of the North," serving as a federal immigration quarantine station from 1907-1937.

The previous owners had stewarded the property for nearly 60 years and Landmarks didn't request designation during the time of the sale. But once the new developer-owner envisioned potential demolitions and a local citizen saw a backhoe on the island, it became important to provide protections for such a highly significant place.

In addition to the "Place in Peril" designation, Landmarks began advocating for the city to provide the

island with historic district status and commissioned architects to research the site's history and significance. The study found that the island's resources meet all six criteria for historic district designation. (A district need only meet one of those six.)

"A local historic district provides a formal means to preserve the existing historic buildings, structures and landscape features," according to executive director Hilary Bassett. "It does not prevent new development. Rather, it provides a formal means to review and manage change, including any new construction, to ensure that it is compatible and sensitive in design, scale and quality of materials to what is already there."

While the district was under consideration, the former immigration station portion of the island was purchased by new owners. In accordance with the city ordinance, they began the preservation review process for improvements to create a family vacation retreat. They and the owner of the fort side have experience working with historic properties and have expressed appreciation for the island's fort and immigration buildings and their history.

"Local historic district designation also provides long-term protection for the historic resources on the island, protections that transcend the ownership of the land," Landmarks wrote in its letter. "This is important, because different owners may have different objectives in owning the island."

Now, House Island will enjoy historic district protection as an important cultural landscape and connection to American military and social history at the gateway to Portland Harbor. ■

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Presented with support from the Quimby Family Foundation and the Rines Thompson Fund of the Maine Community Foundation.

WHO We Are



Dave Robinson

Dave Robinson's experience with real estate management and development in Portland has given him a unique perspective on the benefits and challenges of preservation. He's serving his second three-year term on the Landmarks board, where he chairs the governance committee. Robinson is originally from a small town in New Hampshire and has come to love Portland. He and his wife live in the Capisic Pond area of the city in a 1748 house that still has many of its original details. "Anyone who has an old house like this knows it's love and toil," he says, "because there's a lot of work."

What do you do at Landmarks?

I'm on my second 3-year term with Landmarks and now I'm chair of the governance committee. It's not one of the exciting positions, but we have important tasks — finding candidates for the board and if necessary making changes to the governance structure. In fact we've made some changes, and now the board is 'leaner and meaner' — more focused in our work supporting Landmarks mission.

What led to your interest in preservation?

I came from a small town, so I chose to live here. Sometimes it's hard to say why you fall in love with a community. I know that whenever I'm in Florida I get lost. All the intersections look the same. Here, it's unique.

I first became involved with what became the Portland Downtown District. That was during the time when all the retail was shifting out to the malls, and that was happening nationwide. When Porteous closed and all the windows were boarded up, that got us all thinking, and there were a lot of people that played a part. We went down to New York and saw that they have districts. The landowners essentially

vote to tax themselves, to raise money to clean the streets, clean the sidewalks, and they work with the police. You could see where the districts would end — this part was dirty, that part was clean. From that we worked on the Portland Downtown District. I don't think that brought the city back to life, but it assisted. At least, if you were not happy that you moved to the suburbs, you'd see a clean downtown and be more apt to come back.

Congress Street was left barren, but then the Maine College of Art came in and I would credit them with bringing back Congress Street and bringing it in as part of the arts district. No one entity did it, all these things came together. I was happy to be part of that. And I'm glad to be a part of Landmarks because we've continued to preserve a lot of that heritage.

And people have come back.

It's very heartening to see people wanting to come to Portland. There's an impressive level of culture and arts. Landmarks needs to continue in its effort to sustain the preservation to make sure we don't lose track of what a great city it is and to keep it that way.

How does your real estate experience factor in?

I was at Dirigo Management, running the management side. We renovated 45 Exchange Street, which gave me first-hand knowledge of the process. That's where I gained some appreciation of that process because as a developer there can be some conflict. It's a layer of regulations. I remember Deb Andrews strongly encouraging us to preserve the windows, so we kept the original windows as best we could. And because of those windows that building stands out from the rest. It's amazing. It's also been interesting for Landmarks itself to have purchased a very old building and come face to face with the actual costs of rehabilitating that building. We no longer just preach, we also practice.

What has Landmarks learned from that and from other property owners?

From my work I knew the whole real estate community, all the brokers in town, and I've been able to talk to them. We were very happy to hear when Landmarks did strategic planning that, while we have what some people perceive as an inherent conflict — preservation vs. development — landlords gave a lot of credit to Landmarks. While they want flexibility and maybe understanding, they appreciate the way the early founders of Landmarks went to the barricades. The great thing about the Old Port is that it's retained a lot of local business.

What about now and the future?

Landmarks has evolved. I think it was necessary to man the barricades in the early years — the building we have now, where that redevelopment of Spring Street happened, that's where it halted.

Now we've changed, as we should have, to an organization that would really like to resolve conflict in the beginning stages. The road to the planning board should start with Landmarks, meaning that we are a friendly organization, ready to work and to suggest ways in which we can help them, rather than butt heads down the road. I'd rather see Landmarks walk into the planning board hand in hand with the developers, and the developers appear to be interested in that too.

The Portland Company is an excellent example. The historical significance of it needs to be taken into account. We're talking with the developers, having them realize the concerns and what the community would like to see there. It's a process and the process will result in a better product. ■

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Retaining Plaster Finishes Can Be Cost Effective and Environmentally Sustainable

THIS ARTICLE EXPLORES benefits of retaining traditional plaster and lath construction in older properties, including *additional cost and energy savings* that can be realized in rehabilitation projects that also benefit the environment.

Three types of lath and plaster assemblies have traditionally been used in North America:

A. Wooden lath was used between the mid-17th century into the 1940s. It required three coats of lime-based plaster;

B. Wire or metal lath, first patented in England in 1797, became popular in the 1920s. It was introduced with the use of gypsum, a harder plaster material which also dried more quickly;

C. Rock lath (or gypsum lath), the immediate predecessor of sheetrock, eliminated wooden laths and is comprised of rectangular, 3/8 inch thick panels. This required only two finish coats of plaster.

Early in the 20th century, plaster and lath began to be replaced in new construction by gypsum board or *drywall*, which was first introduced in 1917 by the US Gypsum Company, under the product name "Sheetrock." Today, it remains the most ubiquitous material in new construction for interior finishes, principally because of its economical cost (\$.80 to \$1.39 per square foot, including labor and material but excluding paint).

The prevailing thinking supporting demolition of existing plaster during rehabilitation centers primarily around labor costs and contingency costs. It is easier to install new wiring, plumbing and ductwork, or wall insulation, without having to work around the original lath and plaster. This approach discounts both the sunk cost and *embodied energy* of manufacture, transportation and installation already invested in existing lath and plaster walls. The economics of extending the future service life of these assemblies, if properly repaired, is ignored.

Costs for demolition, removal and disposal of lath and plaster materials vary widely depending upon labor region but, one source (Homewyse.com) estimates \$2.84 - \$6.43 per square foot (psf) before fees and permits,



Retaining decorative plaster, moldings, and details saves original materials, embodied energy, and costs. Often the craftsmanship represented by finishing details is costly, if not impossible, to replicate.

which may not include the cost of removal and disposal of baseboards, door and window casings, and ceiling moldings.

Advantages of Plaster Repair

With further analysis, the actual costs of retention and repair of plaster walls and ceilings vs. replacement with drywall can be quite comparable. Installation of new lath and plaster can cost \$5-\$20 per square foot, as much or more than the cost of demolition and removal; while repair by a skilled artisan may start as low as \$2-\$3 per

square foot. When adding the cost of new drywall installation to the cost of demolition, yielding \$3.64 - \$7.82 psf, the economics of retaining or repairing existing plaster appears quite competitive. This economic argument further improves if the cost of replacing baseboards, crown molding and door and window casings (at \$3 - \$6 per lineal foot un-installed) is added to the overall cost. Often the craftsmanship represented by these finishing details is costly, if not impossible, to replicate.

In conclusion, there are compelling arguments supporting the retention and repair of existing plaster walls:

- Most (98%) of the *embodied energy*, labor, quality of materials, and skill is retained.
- Hazardous dust, the cost of demolition, and waste disposal is eliminated.
- Cost of replacing still-serviceable baseboards, window casings and ceiling moldings is saved and original materials are retained.
- Improved insulation value is achieved (1" plaster wall has a higher R-Value than 1/2" sheetrock).
- The lateral resistance strength of walls is reinforced and superior sound attenuation is achieved.
- Higher inherent fire resistance ratings are retained, which can be supplemented with use of intumescent paints.

Less destructive methods than complete demolition can be used to install new wiring, ductwork, and flexible piping, including "fishing" or removing baseboards. Insulation can be blown into wall stud cavities.

Overall, retaining and repairing your plaster walls may be financially comparable to new construction, with the added benefit of retaining original architectural features while being more environmentally sustainable. ■



Christopher Closs

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Providing historic preservation technical assistance and tax credit pre-assessments.

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Landmarks Calendar

Greater Portland Landmarks looks forward to engaging in advocacy and education to preserve the extraordinary historic buildings, neighborhoods, and landscapes that make greater Portland an increasingly popular place to live, work and visit. We invite you to join us!

PROGRAMS & EVENTS

The Preservation of Portland Since 1961

Fridays, 11 am – 1 pm.

Landmarks will be open to view our new large scale murals depicting the evolution of Preservation in Portland in images and text in the **Gregory W. Boulos Gallery of Architecture and Design at Landmarks' Safford House headquarters, 93 High Street, Portland**

Old House Trade Show

Saturday & Sunday March 28, 10 am – 5 pm, & March 29, 2014, 10 am – 4 pm.

Meet the artisans and tradespeople who can help you repair and renovate your old house. Learn from the experts in workshops and Q & A sessions on topics from repairing windows to planning your project. Find out about energy efficient practices and design solutions to update older homes. Bring photos, plans and measurements to better assist your conversations with the experts.

Holiday Inn by the Bay, 88 Spring Street, Portland.

Art Exhibition: The Paintings of John Calvin Stevens

April 21 – July 15, 2015, Wed., Fri. - Sun. 1:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m., Thurs., 1:00 p.m. - 7:00 p.m.

An exhibition featuring the landscape paintings of noted architect John Calvin Stevens, many painted *en plein air* with a group of local artists known as the Brush'uns who depicted scenes in Cape Elizabeth, Capisic, Scarborough, Stroudwater and more. Presented with support from the Quimby Family Foundation and the Rines Thompson Fund of the Maine Community Foundation.

University of New England Art Gallery, 716 Stevens Avenue, Portland.

Lecture by Earle G. Shettleworth, Jr. and Paul Stevens

Wednesday, April 29, 6 pm

Earle Shettleworth, Director of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, and Paul Stevens, architect and great grandson of the artist, as co-curators of the exhibition, discuss the paintings of John Calvin Stevens. A reception will follow, at the gallery. **Ludke Auditorium (lecture) and Art Gallery (reception), University of New England Art Gallery, 716 Stevens Avenue, Portland.**

SAVE THE DATES

Observatory opens Saturday, May 23

Flag Day, Portland Observatory Museum Sunday, June 14, 10 am – 5 pm

Historic House Gala Saturday, June 20

Plein Air Painting Workshop with Cooper Dragonette, Friday, July 11, Saturday, July 12, and Sunday, July 13

ARCHITALX LECTURE SERIES

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April 2: Stephen Kopp and Monica Adair,

Acre Architects, St. John, New Brunswick

April 9: Barbara Wilks, W Architecture & Landscape Architecture, New York, NY

April 16: Building Community Social Gathering

April 23: Gary Hilderbrand, Reed Hilderbrand, Cambridge, MA

April 30: Jeff Kovel, Skylab Architecture, Portland, OR

For more information, and to register for events and programs:
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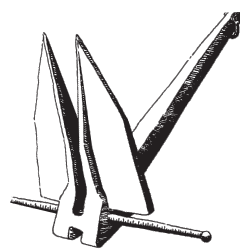
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