



# GUILFORD PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

Newsletter

Fall 2005

## Demolition-delay ordinance passes, capping years-long effort by GPA



THE 125 YEAR-OLD GUILFORD DEPOT (FOREGROUND) WAS DEMOLISHED BY AMTRAK WITHOUT WARNING ON FEB. 23, 2003.

**O**n August 1 the Guilford Board of Selectmen unanimously adopted a Delay of Demolition Ordinance extending to some 450 Guilford structures the qualified protection against teardowns enjoyed by buildings in the town's local historic districts.

Researched and drafted by Marjorie Noyes, chair of the GPA's Education Committee, and revised by her in concert with Buildings Inspector George Gdovin and Town Historian Joel Helander, the legislation provides for a delay of up to 90 days for discussion of alternatives to demolition following public notice of plans to substantially alter or tear down. The legislation went into effect this September.

The Ordinance imposes a 30-day moratorium on demolition of any building listed on the Town of Guilford Survey of Historic Buildings. If after the waiting period there is no opposition, a demolition permit will be issued by the Town. If there is written opposition, the waiting period is automatically extended to 90 days, at the end of which the owner may reject alternative solutions and proceed with demolition.

Ms Noyes, who died this spring after a long illness, completed the basic draft in August 2004 after studying the content and public reception of similar ordinances in a number of Connecticut towns. She submitted the draft to First Selectman Gene Bishop at that time with a letter stating, "Tear downs of buildings have increased at an alarming rate in recent years. Guilford's historic structures are a significant part of the town's cultural, social and economic character. They encourage tourism and make an important contribution to the town's prosperity."

Ms Noyes was posthumously honored at the Annual Meeting in May when a special education fund was named for her in recognition of her outstanding work.

— John Cox

### Education committee updates survey, protecting significant historic buildings.



**T**he Education Committee, which was established for the purpose of making additions to the 1980-81

Town of Guilford Survey of Historic Buildings, was chaired by Marje Noyes until her death earlier this year. The GPA successfully applied for a small grant from the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, a grant that allows the committee to make use of the services of a professional consultant, James Sexton.

One of the aims of the committee is to add to the Survey modernist houses built in the 1950s and 1960s. Another focus is on vernacular structures, including barns, which were omitted from earlier surveys for one reason or another. Additions will also be made of some buildings in the area of the Green. Finally, several structures in North Guilford will be included.

Although the Survey is the committee's official mission, committee members have also been attentive to interesting by-products of their survey work. For example, they have gathered (by interview as well as by

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*This first quarterly Newsletter, as readers of our local newspapers will appreciate, reflects an increased level of activity on the part of the GPA. We plan to continue moving forward on both fronts—working to preserve the distinctive character of historic Guilford and communicating our successes to members and friends in a timely way.*



## Village Center Committee advances walkway project with state grant for study

and construction of the trail, the committee hopes to create a dynamic pedestrian experience attracting not just local residents but the many tourists vacationing on the Connecticut shoreline who, although they may visit and shop on the picturesque Guilford Green, miss the other important historical assets and landscapes in the immediate vicinity.



In July the Village Center Committee of the GPA received an \$8,000 state grant to conduct a village-footpath feasibility study. The committee has been working in partnership with the Town of Guilford, local residents and property owners, as well as other stakeholders in the area, to promote the footpath. In return for the grant from the Connecticut Historic Preservation and Museum Division, the GPA and the Town each will contribute \$3,333, the Town's share to be donated in kind.

As currently envisioned, the walkway would connect with the Green at its north end and the harborside and waterfront at its south end. In between, the traveler would learn about local history in each period of Guilford's development: its Colonial settlement, the era of coastal trading and local agriculture, the advent of the railroad and small industries, the development of arterial highways and, finally, transition to the postwar garden suburb.



The Committee (formerly known as the Village Projects Committee) is working to create an "in-town" heritage recreational and scenic footpath. The proposed Guilford Village Walkway would link up key historical structures and landscapes in the village center and provide state-of-the-art interpretive markers and displays describing the numerous sites and vistas found along the way.

Along the way, the walkway would pass by the Whitfield-Street historic neighborhood, one of the state's outstanding districts of mid- to late-19th century domestic architecture. It would also pass the Henry Whitfield Museum, the earliest stone dwelling in Connecticut, the pastoral Woodruff Farm and the rare or unique surviving railroad buildings at the Guilford train station. The terminus would be the harborside, where shipping and trading have played a key role in local history from the early 1600s.

Through architecturally and environmentally sensitive design, layout

— Corinne McManemin

ABOVE PHOTOS: THE WHITFIELD STREET CORRIDOR, JOINING THE TOWN GREEN AND THE TOWN DOCK, WILL BE AN ALTERNATIVE ROUTE OF THE EVENTUAL WALKWAY. PHOTOS BY ELLEN EBERT

### protecting significant historic buildings *continued* from page 1



library research) information about the history of the Old Quarry Association and its modernist homes. The hope is that eventually GPA publications in social history will draw on this research. Walking tours are also being considered.

The committee plans to finish its work on the survey by April, 2006. Members of the committee are: Peter Hare (chair), Penny Colby, Sandra Flatow, Jean Kelley, Sarah McCulloch, Walter Weissenborn and Jonathan Wuerth.

— Peter Hare

VERNACULAR AND MODERNIST HOUSES ON OLD QUARRY ROAD (RIGHT AND ON PREVIOUS PAGE) WILL BE INCLUDED IN THE GPA'S REVISED SURVEY OF HISTORIC BUILDINGS. PHOTOS BY PETER HARE

## New Fund-Raising Committee launches \$150,000 capital campaign



The Annual Meeting of the GPA in May, focusing on Guilford's historic railroad buildings, served as the kickoff for the first capital campaign in the organization's history. President Preston Maynard had previously established a Fund-Raising Committee for this purpose, consisting of Larry Noble as chair, and John Cole, Patrick Smith, Ed Seibert and Preston as members.

The main purpose of the campaign is to raise the necessary funding to save endangered buildings, like the railroad station, and to add to the GPA's endowment for funding future projects. The goal for the campaign, excluding grants from public and private sources, is

\$150,000. Donors are being offered the option of making a one-time contribution in 2005, or spreading their gift over three years through 2007.

Solicitations from individuals have already begun, with letters to members of the GPA board sent out in June, and followed up in July. By mid-August, a total of over \$10,000 had been received from the board, an excellent start for our campaign. Letters to a special list of generous donors in the past will be sent out in early September, as well as another letter to the GPA membership and other individuals. These letters make it clear that this is a one-time capital campaign, and not an annual fund-

raising letter, with the hope that recipients will dig a little deeper for this special appeal. Some individuals will be contacted by telephone or in person, either before the letters are mailed, or soon thereafter. A follow-up letter will be sent later to those not responding, and board members will be asked to contact individuals

whom they know and whom they feel comfortable calling or visiting.

A second major effort will be conducted later in the fall with banks and businesses in the area, and with local and state foundations and similar organizations. The Guilford Savings Bank has already made a generous contribution of

\$1,500, and the Fund Raising Committee is optimistic that Guilford's business community will support this special appeal to save the Railroad Station's brick engine house and water tower, with a long-term goal of restoration and adaptive reuse of the old Guilford Depot buildings. This imaginative project will contribute significantly to the character and vitality of the immediate station area and surrounding neighborhood, and in addition the re-use of these buildings will enhance the tax base and increase Guilford's appeal as a tourist destination.

The Guilford Preservation Alliance would like to thank contributors to the capital campaign for their participation in preserving some of Guilford's most historic buildings. We look forward to keeping you advised regarding our progress over the coming months.

— Larry Noble



## GPA proposes to use the historic Norton House as a shoreline Writers' Center

In 2004 the GPA began negotiations with the South Central Connecticut Regional Water Authority to preserve the home built in 1824 by brothers John and Billy Norton. This Federal-style farmhouse located on Great Hill Road in North Guilford, which had been slated for

dismantling or demolition, is now being considered as the site of the Norton Writers Center. The Center would connect the shoreline community to writing by promoting the literary arts.

Guilford has long supported the arts through various local organizations. Although

there is a large community of writers along the shoreline, there is at present no organization in the area dedicated to the art of writing. A writers center, as a focal point for the written arts unlike anything available nearby, would provide a vibrant place for those who

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THE GPA'S FALL CAPITAL CAMPAIGN IS RAISING FUNDS TO SAVE ENDANGERED BUILDINGS, LIKE THE WATER TOWER (SHOWN IN A WORM'S-EYE VIEW AT TOP LEFT) AND THE STEAM-LOCOMOTIVE MAINTENANCE SHED (ABOVE). BOTH STRUCTURES WILL BE STABILIZED, AND THEN RESTORED, WHEN NEGOTIATIONS TO ACQUIRE THEM FROM AMTRAK ARE COMPLETED.

PHOTOS BY ELLEN EBERT



**Norton House** *continued from page 3*

to explore how the Norton house might be dedicated to the art of writing. The GPA drew up an estimate of projected costs for developing and maintaining a center. Kudlinski identified a core group for artistic guidance in all genres. Donita Aruny and Julie McClennan of the Shoreline Arts Alliance advised Kudlinski and the GPA on how best to develop such a facility.

It was determined that in the long term, income to run the house might be generated by offering memberships to the center at graduated rates and renting office space to writers, providing adult and children's classes as well as tutoring in writing and research for students in grades 8 through 12. The house would provide

workspaces and a lounge for local writers, as well as a location for readings and seminars. Potential fundraisers might include book signings and sales, readings, and guest speakers.

The GPA, with the help of Kudlinski, hopes to complete a business plan and budget, recruit a board of directors, and assemble a creative steering committee within the next few months. A writers center could become a much-loved addition to the local arts community, providing a service to the shoreline by encouraging excellence among local writers, facilitating professional development among that group, and connecting the community with the world of writing.

— Barbara Stuart

THE FEDERAL-STYLE NORTON HOUSE LOCATED AT 1115 GREAT HILL ROAD WILL BECOME A WRITERS CENTER IF CURRENT PLANS AND LONG-TERM LEASE NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE REGIONAL WATER AUTHORITY SUCCEED.  
PHOTO BY PRESTON MAYNARD

love literature and the written word.

This spring, after Preston Maynard discussed a long-term lease arrangement with the Water Authority and considering how best to preserve the house, GPA members Ed Seibert and Barbara Stuart and well-known local children's book author Kay Kudlinski began

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