

**MEETING MINUTES**  
**MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
**January 12, 2022**

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, the Commission meeting was held remotely in a Zoom meeting starting at 1:00 PM.

Chairman Rosenberry called the meeting to order at 1:08 pm. On behalf of Secretary Galvin, he welcomed the Commissioners. Chairman Rosenberry next addressed the audience, thanking them for attending. For those individuals who may not have attended commission meetings in the past, Chairman Rosenberry explained the structure of the meeting and when in the process the public could address the commission.

Chairman Rosenberry then turned to the first item on the agenda, and opened the Public Hearing regarding the request for MHC approval of a partial release of the Preservation Restriction on 38 Rangeley Road in the Town of Winchester. The chair asked for any recusals. Commissioner Sullivan recused himself from the discussion and voting on the Winchester property. Mr. Rosenberry then turned the meeting over to Michael Steinitz, Director of Preservation Planning and Deputy SHPO, to introduce the request before the Commission.

Mr. Steinitz thanked the Chairman. Mr. Steinitz presented his introduction with PowerPoint presentation slides. A copy of the slides is on file with the transcript of this hearing. The property subject to today's hearing is located in the Town of Winchester. The Skillings-Manny House, at 38 Rangeley Road in Winchester was individually listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places in 1989 as part of the Winchester Multiple Resource Area nomination. The property consists of three parcels together making up approximately 40,608 square feet of land, with a 2-1/2 story, Panel Brick style residential building.

The building was constructed between 1875 and 1876 by David Skillings as a rental property on his extensive park-like Rangeley Place estate just outside Winchester Center. In 1879 Skillings sold the building to John T. Manny, Treasurer of the Winchester Savings Bank, of which Skillings was the President. The architect of the building was George D. Rand, a prolific designer who was greatly influential on

the character of Winchester's architectural development while he resided there from the mid-1870s to the mid-1880s. His numerous commissions in the town included several other residences for David Skillings at Rangeley Place.

The Panel Brick, Skillings-Manny House is trimmed with a variety of materials including a brownstone water table and window sills, black tar-dipped decorative brick courses, and two encaustic tiles on its front chimney. It is enclosed by a slate hip roof with modillions and corner brackets. The asymmetrical façade includes a segmental arched entry with double-leaf doors set next to a projecting wing. A porch with trefoils cut into the balustrade and bracketed posts extends across the façade from the wing. There are segmental arched windows on both stories, and a bay window on the northwest elevation. Behind the house on the property is a brick, double-bay garage built in 1923.

The building had a succession of owners over its first hundred plus years, and was purchased by the current owners in 1988. In 2018 they conveyed perpetual preservation restrictions on the building and property to the organization Historic New England.

Relevant to this request for release, is the abutting property to the southeast, the Jacobs-Churchill House at 3 Meadowcroft Road, dating to 1932, which was part of a later phase of the buildout of the Rangeley subdivision. Described as English Cottage Revival in style, the building's architect was Charles Crombie of Lord Engineering Associates in Weston, who designed it for Sumner and Madeline Jacobs. Mr. Jacobs was a Boston newspaper advertising executive. This 1-1/2 story, stone and concrete block cottage has waney-edge wood siding on its side gables, and a tile-shingled roof with a central chimney. An original concrete-block garage wing was converted to living space in the 1960s. The house was purchased by Maureen Meister in 2003. In 2016 she conveyed perpetual preservation restrictions on the property to Historic New England.

The owners of 38 Rangeley Rd., Maureen Meister and David Feigenbaum, are requesting the release from restrictions of an approximately 4,214 square foot portion of the Rangeley Road property that abuts 3 Meadowcroft Rd, so that they may transfer that parcel of unimproved land (labeled as Parcel 2B on a recorded plot plan) to 3 Meadowcroft Rd. The owner of 3 Meadowcroft Rd, Maureen Meister, and Historic New England will then amend and restate the preservation restrictions on 3 Meadowcroft Rd to incorporate the transferred parcel. The parcel

consists of an approximately 30-foot-wide strip of land that extends for about 139 feet from Meadowcroft Road to the rear property line of 3 Meadowcroft Rd

The preservation restrictions on both 38 Rangeley Road and 3 Meadowcroft Road require prior approval by Historic New England of any proposed alterations to these properties, including alterations to the land settings of the buildings on the properties. The terms of the protections of these restrictions on the landscape and topographic setting of the buildings on their respective properties is essentially identical.

Under Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 184, Section 32, preservation restrictions held by charitable corporations or trusts may be released in whole or in part only with approvals by both the municipality and the Massachusetts Historical Commission following public hearings to determine that the release is in the public interest. The Town of Winchester Select Board held a public hearing on December 6, 2021, following which it certified its approval of this partial release of preservation restrictions on 38 Rangeley Road. At that meeting the Winchester Select Board also approved the proposed amended and restated preservation restriction for 3 Meadowcroft Road.

Chairman Rosenberry thanked Mr. Steinitz, and then opened the meeting for public comment. The chairman recognized Carissa Demore, who identified herself as Team Leader for Preservation Services at Historic New England, the holder for the restrictions for 3 Meadowcroft Road and 38 Rangeley Road.

Ms. Demore thanked the Commission for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of Historic New England regarding the preservation restriction at 38 Rangeley Road in Winchester. Having worked with owners Maureen Meister and David Feigenbaum to place preservation restrictions on adjacent properties at 3 Meadowcroft Road in 2016 and 38 Rangeley Road in 2018, we are now in the unusual position of seeking to revise those agreements to allow the owners to transfer a small parcel of land between the two properties from protection under the 38 Rangeley restrictions to protection by the 3 Meadowcroft restrictions.

Modifying the preservation restrictions will allow the parcel to be conveyed as part of 3 Meadowcroft, which will allow for unimpeded access to the rear of the property without the necessity of crossing into a neighbor's yard. This conveyance has the added benefit of restoring the boundary between the two properties to its original, historic location.

The proposed changes to the legal agreements are consistent with the intent of both preservation restrictions to preserve the historic, architectural, scenic, natural, and open space value and significance of the properties. Both preservation restrictions contain similar terms prohibiting subdivision or separate conveyance of parcels in order to prevent insensitive development or alteration of the park-like landscape. Far from being an incompatible change, the proposed transfer of the parcel from one property to the other serves to enhance the integrity of the historic landscape and eliminates a potential barrier to the ongoing care and maintenance of the historic Jacobs-Churchill House at 3 Meadowcroft.

Following the release of the restrictions on the parcel presently under the 38 Rangeley preservation restriction agreement, Historic New England will record an amended and restated preservation restriction agreement for 3 Meadowcroft, which will continue the protection of the parcel in question. No other provisions of the agreements will change.

Both the Partial Release and the Amended and Restated Agreement have been executed by the owners and Historic New England and approved by the Town of Winchester. We are grateful to the Massachusetts Historical Commission for your consideration of this matter and respectfully request your certification of the partial release. I'm joined today by the owners and by and by attorney Doug Muir who is counsel for this project, and we'd be happy to answer any questions you might have. Thank you.

The Chairman thanked Ms. Demore. The Chairman then asked for any questions or comments from the Commission regarding the testimony. Hearing none, the Chairman then asked for any other testimony from the public. Hearing none, the chair called for a MOTION TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC COMMENT PORTION OF THE HEARING. A MOTION was made by Commissioner DeWitt and SECONDED by Commissioner Kleespies. The chairman called for any questions or comments from the commission regarding the motion. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The chair called for a MOTION TO APPROVE THE PARTIAL RELEASE OF PRESERVATION RESTRICTIONS ON THE SKILLINGS-MANNY HOUSE IN WINCHESTER. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Dewitt and SECONDED by Commissioner Kish. The chairman called for questions or comments from the commission. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

The Chairman then asked for a MOTION TO CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Pride and SECONDED by Commissioner Early. The chairman called for any questions or comments from the commission regarding the motion. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Public Hearing Ended at 1:25PM

At this point Commissioner Sullivan returned to the meeting.

Chairman Rosenberry then turned to the next item on the agenda, the Local Historic District Preliminary Study Reports, first calling for any recusals. Hearing none, he turned the meeting over to Jennifer Doherty, Local Government Programs Coordinator. Ms. Doherty presented the study reports with presentation slides. A copy of the slides is on file with these minutes.

### **Keene's Brook Local Historic District, Duxbury**

Ms. Doherty began with the **Keene's Brook Local Historic District** in the town of **Duxbury**. The Town of Duxbury is proposing to designate a new single-property local historic district, the Keene's Brook Historic District. The impetus for the district came from the property owner, who is in support of the proposed designation.

The district would protect a single property at 324 Keene Street in the Ashdod area of Duxbury.

The proposed Keene's Brook Historic District stands away from other designated properties closer to the coast. These include two local historic districts, designated in 2011, and two National Register of Historic Places districts, designated in 1986 and 2021. The surrounding neighborhood is still rural, with heavily tree-lined streets. To the north was the 19<sup>th</sup> century settlement of Ashdod, and there are still several other 19<sup>th</sup> century Capes in the area, although they are spread out and interspersed by later 20<sup>th</sup> century infill construction. Further north, Keene's Brook was an early mill site, and today much of the land north and west of the house is protected conservation land.

Less than a quarter mile north of the Randall House, the Ashdod settlement included a small chapel, which by the 1890s had been acquired by a group of Adventists. The chapel still stands, along with men's and women's dormitories and

a dining hall across the street. The chapel has been used occasionally in recent years by the religious organization as a place to await the second coming of Christ. The nearby cemetery dates to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century and the settlement of Ashdod.

The Randall House presents as an early 19<sup>th</sup> century Cape, although the Study Report notes that framing members visible on the interior suggest several different phases of construction. The house features a Federal style entry door surround with pilasters and topped by square lights. Ells extend from the west side of the house, where a large barn-like addition was constructed in 2009.

The earliest residents are believed to be Thomas Randall, Sr. and his wife Sarah Simmons Randall, and records indicate that they married around 1782. Their grandson, Francis Randall, lived in the house until his death in 1924. The property was worked as an active farm through at least the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Following the death of Francis Randall, the house was sold to Cape Verdean immigrants Antonio and Jennie Santos. Antonio Santos was a mason and may have constructed the fieldstone driveway.

MHC staff recommends acknowledging receipt of the Preliminary Study Report for the Keene's Brook Historic District and providing the following advisory recommendations and comments:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission encourages the Town of Duxbury to establish the Keene's Brook Historic District.

The Massachusetts Historical Commission encourages the protection of additional significant historic resources through a larger district or additional local historic districts.

### **Abolition Row, New Bedford**

Ms. Doherty then presented the **Abolition Row Local Historic District in New Bedford**. The City of New Bedford is proposing to designate two new local historic districts.

The proposed Abolition Row district would protect 38 parcels along Seventh Street in the southwest of New Bedford's downtown, west of the city's waterfront. The district will include two vacant parcels that are currently being redeveloped into a park commemorating the abolition movement in the city.

The name "Abolition Row" was given to the district by the New Bedford Historical Society to highlight the area's significance within New Bedford's history. With its

heavily Quaker population and diverse residents due to its maritime trade, New Bedford was known in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century as a haven for slaves escaping north to freedom. By 1860, the city's black population was 6.8% of the total population, and many of the city's prominent white and black residents were active abolitionists. Since 2016, owners along Seventh Street have been actively advocating for the proposed district. While abolition activities extended to other nearby properties, the proposed district covers the core of significant properties and engaged owners. The Ward Councilor for the district has also been involved in the designation process and is supportive.

The neighborhood developed in the early and mid-19<sup>th</sup> century as a residential district west of the city's waterfront. Located just east of the major estates on County Street, the houses are slightly smaller in scale. The area was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as part of the large County Street Historic District in 1976, with the Central New Bedford Historic District to the northeast, designated in 1980, and the Griffin Street Cemetery to the southeast, designated in 2014. The New Bedford Historic District is to the northeast, closer to the water. It was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1966, and is currently New Bedford's only local historic district, designated in 1971. There are several individual National Historic Landmarks within the proposed district as well. The surrounding area is a mix of residential, professional office, and institutional uses, with a commercial district to the north along Union Street.

The residential buildings in the district are a wide mix of forms, styles and dates. They include, clockwise from the top left, the Federal style 1820 Akin House; the 1831 Allen House and the 1842 Tucker House, both in the Greek Revival style, and the 1892 Queen Anne style house at 52 Seventh Street.

The most prominent non-residential building in the district is the Rotch-Jones Duff House and Garden Museum at 396 County Street, in the top left. Designed by Richard Upjohn as his first residential commission in 1834, the Greek Revival style house is an individual National Historic Landmark, designated in 2005, with a preservation restriction held by the MHC. It is open to the public as a museum. Other non-residential buildings in the area, clockwise from top right, include the former Mary Rotch House, built in 1838 and now used as a religious building; the 1833 Greek Revival Rodman-Howland House, sited to the south of the Rotch-Jones-Duff House and converted to offices; and the Federal style 1785 Society of

Friends meetinghouse, the city's first Quaker meetinghouse and later owned by free Blacks Nathan and Polly Johnson.

The proposed Abolition Row district has two interconnected areas of significance. First, the neighborhood was a residential area for upper and middle class New Bedford residents during the early 19<sup>th</sup> century when the city was the center of the whaling industry. It included an economically, socially, and racially diverse group of residents and owners, from some of the wealthiest white whalers to free Black merchants. As noted earlier, the Rotch family had several houses in the area and were among the most prominent and wealthiest residents, deriving their income from whaling. Along Seventh Street, other minor whalers, ship owners and captains, and commercial agents constructed their own residences, several blocks back from the wharves and south of the main commercial spine of Union Street.

The second area of significance for Abolition Row is in its name – it became an area of significant abolition activity in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Perhaps most prominent is the house of free Blacks Nathan and Polly Johnson at 21 Seventh Street. The couple owned several other properties in the proposed district, but their house at 21 Seventh Street was the first residence of Frederick Douglass after he escaped to freedom, and is the only one of his three residences in New Bedford that is still standing. Nathan Johnson was one of the wealthiest Blacks in New Bedford, deriving his income from rents of the neighboring buildings, a confectionery at 23 Seventh Street, and partnerships in a dry goods store, a restaurant, and a whaling ship. The house and nearby associated properties are a National Historic Landmark, designated in 2000, and the house is open to the public as a museum. The Rotch family, active Quakers, strongly advocated for abolition beginning in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The Rotchs, along with other district residents the Howlands, regularly hired individuals of color to work on their ships or in their homes, contributing to New Bedford's reputation as a place where free Blacks could find employment. In recognition of the area's significance, the City is establishing a park at 18 and 20 Seventh Street, the site of two recently-demolished houses. One of the houses was the home of Elisha Thornton, Jr., the grandson of an abolitionist Quaker preacher. It is documented that he housed at least one escaped slave in his house at this site.

MHC staff recommends acknowledging receipt of the Preliminary Study Report for the Abolition Row Local Historic District and providing the following advisory recommendations and comments:



The Massachusetts Historical Commission encourages the City of New Bedford to establish the Abolition Row Local Historic District.

### **Mechanics Lane Local Historic District, New Bedford**

Ms. Doherty then presented the **Mechanics Lane Local Historic District in New Bedford**.

The City of New Bedford is also proposing to designate the Mechanics Lane Local Historic District. Like Abolition Row, impetus for the Mechanics Lane district came from the street's residents, who have been advocating for the district since 2016. The Ward Councilor is also supportive of the proposal.

The proposed Mechanics Lane district would protect 30 properties along either side of the short Mechanics Lane, a cobblestone residential street tucked into the heart of downtown New Bedford, near City Hall, the Public Library, and other large institutional and commercial buildings. The short stretch of Mechanics Lane that exists today is only a small piece of the street that originally ran west from Purchase Street to County Street.

The proposed district is part of the County Street National Register of Historic Places district, listed in 1976, and the Central New Bedford Historic District, designated in 1980. New Bedford's only local historic district, designated a National Historic Landmark in 1966 and established in 1971, is located several blocks to the east. The proposed district includes the First Baptist Church, listed individually on the National Register in 1975, which MHC holds a preservation restriction on. The street itself is a small residential street with standalone 19<sup>th</sup> century single-family houses, a contrast to the surrounding large commercial and institutional buildings of downtown New Bedford. After a brief interruption between City Hall and a parking garage, Mechanics Lane does continue behind some of the commercial buildings and along a parking lot.

The buildings on Mechanics Lane proper date to the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and are primarily small residential structures. Two of the oldest structures are the Federal style Tilden House and Russell House, both dating to 1830, in the top left. Other later houses include Greek Revival and Italianate finish.

The buildings fronting on Elm Street to the north display similar styles as those on Mechanics Lane, but are notably larger. On William Street, to the south, the buildings reflect the more commercial nature of that street and include two prominent churches. The earlier of the two is the 1829 First Baptist Church, which

still houses its congregation. It was the church of Lt. Henry Martyn Robert, who developed “Robert’s Rules of Order” after an especially disorderly church meeting. The First Universalist Church, constructed in 1855, has been the home of several congregations, include a Jewish temple and an A. M. E. Zion congregation named for Frederick Douglass. It currently houses an art gallery.

Mechanics Lane developed as a small residential enclave in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Directories show that residents had typical blue collar jobs often associated with the waterfront and whaling industries. This gave the street its name – in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, those who worked with their hands were often termed “mechanics.” Many of the properties were also used as rental housing or rooming houses for single men.

MHC staff recommends acknowledging receipt of the Preliminary Study Report for the Mechanics Lane Local Historic District and providing the following advisory recommendations and comments:

The Massachusetts Historical Commission encourages the City of New Bedford to establish the Mechanics Lane Local Historic District.

Chairman Rosenberry thanked Ms. Doherty, and called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the MHC staff recommendations on the Preliminary Study Report for the **Keene’s Brook Local Historic District in Duxbury**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Sullivan and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. The chairman called for questions or comments from the commission. Hearing none, he called for questions or comments from the public. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the MHC staff recommendations on the Preliminary Study Report for the **Abolition Row Local Historic District in New Bedford**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Kleespies and SECONDED by Commissioner Kellie Carter Jackson. The chairman called for questions or comments from the commission. Hearing none, he called for questions or comments from the public. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairman Rosenberry then called for a MOTION TO ACCEPT the MHC staff recommendations on the Preliminary Study Report for the **Mechanics Lane Local Historic District in New Bedford**. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Sullivan and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. The chairman called for

questions or comments from the commission. Hearing none, he called for questions or comments from the public. Hearing none, he moved the motion. The motion CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

This concluded the voting. Chairman Rosenberry then turned to the next item on the agenda, **Preview of March 9, 2022 National Register Nominations**, and recognized Ben Haley, National Register Director, who explained to the commission that there would be five nominations on the agenda for the March 9 meeting. Copies of the nominations will be sent to the Commissioners about two weeks prior to the meeting.

**The Nominations Are:**

Boston, Camden Street Development Historic District

Northampton, Clarke School for the Deaf Historic District

Worcester, Indian Hill School

Worcester, Main and Franklin Streets Historic District

Holyoke, War Memorial Building

The Chairman thanked Mr. Haley for the preview of the National Register agenda for March, and he then turned to the next item on the agenda, the **Executive Director's Report**. He then recognized Brona Simon, Executive Director.

Ms. Simon began by noting that Ben Haley has been promoted to National Register Director with the retirement in December of Betsy Friedberg from the MHC. Betsy, during her tenure at MHC, oversaw the addition of hundreds, if not thousands, of properties to the National Register, so many that it's impossible to count. We will miss her terribly, but we feel that under Ben's guidance, the National Register program will continue to be as strong as ever.

Ms. Simon noted that MHC is continuing to try to fill staff positions including for an Architectural Reviewer, an Architectural Historian and an Archaeologist, and is having a hard time finding qualified candidates.

Ms. Simon then announced that the National Park Service recently changed their procedures for private property owner's ability to object to his/her property being listed in the National Register. Up until now the Park Service required owner objections to be notarized. Now, objections will not have to be notarized when the

owner writes a letter of objection as long as the letter is signed with the words, “under penalty of perjury”.

She then announced that the Park Service has an advisory board of members of the public and is looking to fill some vacancies to help advise the Secretary of Interior’s Director, Deb Haaland, the National Park Service, and the National Historic Landmarks Program. She then said that the Park Service is also looking for candidates for their new committee to implement their recent order to replace derogatory names for Federal land units, including not just National Parks, but US Forest Service lands; Bureau of Land Management lands; and other Department of Interior programs that hold Federal land. This committee is now seeking members including representatives of Native American tribes and organizations and Native Hawaiian organizations; and people with backgrounds in civil rights and race relations, anthropology, history, geography or other cultural studies. If any commissioners are interested in any of these programs, she asked that they send her an email, and she will forward them a copy of the links for more information.

This completed the Executive Director’s report.

Hearing no further discussion, Chairman Rosenberry called for any new business.

He recognized Commissioner Sullivan who said he would like to make a MOTION to commend Betsy Friedberg for her many, many years of service as the Director of the National Register Program. The MOTION was SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. The Chair asked for comments from the Commissioner:

Commissioner DeWitt said now that Betsy has turned over her task to Ben, he will be seeing notes from him about things he has spotted in the nominations, and he looking forward to harassing him instead of Betsy.

Commissioner Ceccacci said she would like to thank Betsy for the many years of reading her National Register nominations and said that Betsy’s comments were an important part of her learning and training, and she will be missed.

Chair Rosenberry added that during his brief time as Chair working with Betsy, in her presentations at these meetings, she was always able to answer all curve ball questions that were thrown her way, and she has been an exemplary state employee in that way.

The Chair then recognized Ms. Friedberg, who said she's very grateful to all the commissioners, and that it's been an honor and a privilege to be at MHC for 37 years. Betsy said that she has loved doing the work and being out in the communities, with the commission, and with her colleagues. She said she will miss everyone, but, it's the right time for her to retire. Thank you to all.

Chairman Rosenberry then moved the MOTION TO COMMEND, which CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. The Chair on behalf of the Commission again wished Betsy well and thanked her for her service all these many years.

The Chair then called for any other new business, and hearing none, he called for a MOTION to adjourn. A MOTION was made by Commissioner Friary and SECONDED by Commissioner DeWitt. The MOTION CARRIED, and the meeting adjourned at 2:02pm.

#### Commissioners Present

John Rosenberry  
Charles Sullivan  
Dennis DeWitt  
Michael McDowell  
Mark Wilson  
Ashley Stolba  
Simone Early  
Anne Pride  
Gina Perille  
Gavin Kleespies  
Kellie Carter Jackson  
Susan Ceccacci  
Patrice Kish  
Caitlin Emery Avenia  
Donald Friary

#### Staff Present

Brona Simon  
Shari Perry-Wallace  
Jennifer Doherty  
Michael Steinitz  
Betsy Friedberg

Ben Haley  
Elizabeth Sherva  
Joshua Dorin  
Peter Stott  
Karen Davis

A TRUE COPY ATTEST

Respectfully submitted,

Shirley Brown