

WORCESTER HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING

September 1, 2005 – 4:15 pm

American Antiquarian Society, Goddard-Daniels House

190 Salisbury Street, Worcester

MINUTES

Members Present: Michael Theerman

Tom Johnson

Peter Schneider

Jeanice Sherman

Tom Constantine

Tom Conroy

Sally Jablonski

Staff Present: Joel Fontane, Director of Planning & Regulatory services

Joseph Borbone, Director of Engineering, DPW

Edgar Luna, Planning & Regulatory Services

Guests: David Rushford, City Clerk & Deborah Packard, Preservation Worcester.

Regular Meeting

- 1- **Call to Order:** Michael Theerman called the meeting to order at 4:15 pm.
- 2- **Approval of the minutes:** The Commission agreed to continue the approval of the minutes to 10-6-05.
- 3- **Presentation of the Goddard-Daniels House:** Ellen Dunlap, a staff member from the American Antiquarian Society made a presentation regarding the historical significance of the American Antiquarian Society, its mission, as well as future goals and objectives of this national institution. Ms. Dunlap also described the history of the acquisition of the Goddard-Daniels house, the importance of its architecture, and the role it plays as an integral part of the American Antiquarian Society.
- 4- **280-282 Highland St. Demolition Delay Hearing:** Edgar Luna informed the Historical Commission that Atty. John Shea had submitted a letter on behalf of the petitioner requesting a continuation of the Demolition Delay Hearing on this matter to October 6, 2005. In his letter, Atty. Shea stated that the requested postponement was needed in order to gather additional information requested by

the Historical Commission. On a motion by Tom Johnson and seconded by Jeanice Sherman, the Commission voted 6-0 to approve the continuation of the Demolition Delay Hearing of 280-282 Highland St. to October 6, 2005.

- 5- **104 Burncoat St. Demolition Presentation:** James Mazeika, owner of a two-family dwelling house at 104 Burncoat St. made a presentation to the Commission regarding his plans to restore the wrap-around porch at this historical house. He stated that he plans to replace damaged materials with like materials, and preserve and restore as many original architectural details as possible. This structure was built in 1898 as the former house of Charles F. Reed, and is fully registered in the MACRIS list (#22-022-00006). Mr. Mazeika also indicated that he plans to apply for a grant from Preservation Worcester to complete this restoration project. His efforts were acknowledged and encouraged by Commission members. There was no vote taken on this matter, as it was an informational presentation only.

- 6- **Local Historic District Signage Project:** Joel Fontane, Director of Planning and Regulatory Services, presented a proposed sign program for the City's two Local Historic Districts. He acknowledged Commissioner Jeanice Sherman for her strong and persistent advocacy for the implementation of this project since 2003. He also credited staff members Edgar Luna for his initiation of this project, and Joseph Borbone for the support that has enabled staff to present a program quickly. Mr. Fontane indicated that Joe Borbone offered to absorb the cost associated with either four pentagon shaped signs, or eight street name sized signs. Mr. Fontane informed the Commission that the initial phase of the sign program would include the manufacture and installation of eight 24"x9" signs or, four 24"x24" pentagon-shaped signs since the cost of the program were not budgeted for FY 06.

Mr. Fontane thanked David Rushford for sharing his extensive knowledge of historic matters and developing the following proposed style and content of the sign program:

Using existing poles, the street name signs will be replaced with "historic district" brown street name signs with the heart symbol. Placed below that will be a sign stating "Local Historic District" with a Cattle Brand Symbol – both signs will be 24" by 9".

Mr. Fontane informed the Commission that the ancient Brand Mark of Worcester "the Cattle Brand" was a sign designated by the General Court (Boston), to the City of Worcester in 1684 "by which the cattle, etc. belonging to the place were to be distinguished" (marked). Although acknowledging that it was a historic symbol associated with Worcester, Mr. Fontane stated that his research also demonstrated that the Cattle Brand Mark is a religious symbol, otherwise known as a "Crossed Cross". He explained that according to his research "the Crossed Cross is a symbol for world evangelization. The central cross symbolizes, as it has since the beginning of time, the four points of the compass. The small crosses

represent the spread of the Christian faith in all four directions.”¹ Given the national controversy over the use of religious symbols by government, Mr. Fontane recommended not using the Cattle Brand for the Local Historic District sign program.

Commissioner Peter Schneider concurred with Mr. Fontane concerns, as his first impression of the symbol was that it was a “Pontifical Cross”. He stated that the use of this symbol is not related to the objective of the sign program – communication of the location of the Local Historic Districts. Mr. Rushford explained that the use of the Cattle Brand symbol would tie in well with Preservation Worcester historic markers program, which also uses this symbol. Jeanice Sherman expressed concern that this symbol could offend many non-Christians residents in both Districts. Ms. Sherman also added that Preservation Worcester has used the Brand Mark of Worcester as their logo in the past (14 years ago), and therefore its use in a city-sponsored program could be problematic. She recommended that the Historical Commission support the use of a City of Worcester “Heart” symbol instead. The Heart symbol has a well-established historic association with the City of Worcester, and is already adopted as a symbol of Worcester.

Dr. Theerman also cautioned fellow Commissioners that the use of the Cattle Brand symbol could generate negative publicity during the initial phase of this project, and prevent any future expansion of it. Following an extensive discussion on this matter, Chairman Michael Theerman asked fellow Commissioners to indicate if they were all in favor of not using the Brand Mark of Worcester as a symbol of the Local Historical District signs, and by showing of hands, all agreed not to use it.

Mr. Fontane concluded his remarks by thanking everyone for their continued support regarding this matter. He then introduced Joseph Borbone, Director of Engineering at the Department of Public Works. Mr. Borbone made a presentation regarding the three tentative mock up signs he created for this project, and described the details of each one. Mr. Borbone also described alternative design, color and placement combinations for the program. The first rectangular sign he presented had the Heart symbol preceding the street name, and the second rectangular sign had the Cattle Brand mark preceding the district’s name. The third sign presented was the pentagon shaped alternative. He indicated that the selected signs would be installed at strategic locations of both districts, affixed to existing street signposts. Colors: The colors available include medium brown with white lettering, and medium green also with white lettering. The Heart symbol would be red, surrounded by white. The cattle brand would be white within a white circle. Placement: the first option would be to place the street sign on top of the district sign. The second option would be to place the district’s sign on top of the street sign. The third option is the pentagon-shaped sign.

¹ www.symbols.com 1997-1999 HME Media.

As to geographic locations, Mr. Borbone suggested to install the Montvale Local Historic District signs at the following intersections: Salisbury and Monadnock Rd., Salisbury and Whitman Rd., Salisbury and Montvale Rd., and Park Ave. and Waconah Rd. In the Massachusetts Avenue Historical District, he recommended to place the signs at the following locations: Park Ave. and Massachusetts Ave., Park Ave. and Drury Lane, Salisbury Regent St., and Salisbury St. and Massachusetts Ave. In addition, the Commission proposed placing signs at key locations within the districts during future expansion of this project, funding permitted, as follows: Mass. Ave and Drury Lane, Mass. Ave. and Metcalf Street, Regent Street and Drury Lane, Monadnock Road and Saga more Road, Ostego Road and Monadnock Road.

Following Mr. Borbone presentation, Commission members discussed at length the pros and cons of each option, including appropriate locations, color options, size and shapes of the signs, symbols to be used, and the wording of the signs. After a careful consideration and upon a motion by Jeanice Sherman and seconded by Peter Schneider, the Historical Commission voted 7-0 to recommend the following:

- A- Not to use the Cattle Brand Mark of Worcester in the historic district sign program.
- B- To use the City's heart symbol in the historic district sign program.
- C- To use 24" by 9" size signs for the program.
- D- Not to use the pentagon shaped signs in the initial phase of sign program.
- E- Install the name of the street on top of the post, and the Local Historic District sign immediately underneath.
- F- Street signs will be medium green color with white lettering using standard modern street name sign font the is more prominent than Historic District sign font.
- G- Historic District signs will be medium brown color with white lettering using a non-modern font.
- H- The Montvale Local Historic District signs will installed at the following intersections: Salisbury and Monadnock Rd., Salisbury and Whitman Rd., Salisbury and Montvale Rd., and Park Ave. and Waconah Rd. The
- I- Massachusetts Avenue Local Historical District signs will be installed at the following intersections: Park Ave. and Massachusetts Ave., Park Ave. and Drury Lane, Salisbury Regent St., and Salisbury St. and Massachusetts Ave.

Upon a motion by Janice Sherman and seconded by Tom Johnson, the Commission voted 7-0 to continue the discussion regarding the appropriate wording and font style to be used in the creation of the Local Historic District signs to September 15, 2005, to be held at 418 Main St. (4th Floor Conference Room).

- 7- **Historic Buildings Marker Project:** Jeanice Sherman reported that she was still gathering additional information regarding this project in preparation for a full report to the Historical Commission in a future meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 6:15 pm.