

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Middleborough Historical Project is to weatherize or to provide climate control for our museum's building #1 and #2 which houses most of our collections. This is to be accomplished by installing a heating/ or heating and air conditioning systems as well as energy efficient windows. Presently, the process has started by having plumbing contractors investigate the buildings to assess what kind of units/system would best meet our needs. This will help preserve the collections and allow more hours/ days of operation.

These two buildings are historically significant because they are what remains of the P.H. Peirce and Co. mill houses on Jackson Street. The town history indicates that the buildings of the original store on the site before the 1834-35 store construction was moved down Jackson St. to be used for mill housing. Though no pictures have been found, could that be the ell of building #2? The MHA museum consist of seven buildings on Jackson St. in a village setting. The mill houses, built in 1820, were acquired from the town in 1971.

A little over four years ago at a board meeting, it was discussed that due to the deterioration of buildings and limited funds to make repairs, perhaps we should consider forgoing the complex and decide which building should be saved. The MHA had raised funds (Mill House Appeal) which was used to re-roof the mill houses. But now the ceilings were collapsing and our collections were in serious danger. The Andrew Wood bequest provided us with much needed funds which enabled us to make several repairs and to invest for future needs of the museum.

The collections need to be preserved; that's why the rehabilitation of the two buildings is essential. Here is a listing of some of the locally significant artifacts in our collection.

- a) an circa 1700 slat-back arm chair by Middleborough carpenter Ephraim Tinkham II, a chair maker who moved to town after the King Phillip's War. This chair was recently on exhibit at Winterthur Museum in Delaware and featured in a book on historic furniture.
- b) a Chippendale card table and side chairs 1770-76, rescued from the burning home of Judge Peter Oliver during the American Revolution. This is also Massachusetts significant since he was the chief justice who presided over the Boston Massacre trial.
- c) Cephas Thompson (1778-1856) was a well known portrait painter who was born and lived in Middleborough. Not only did he paint here but also in the South. His paintings are found in the National Gallery in Wash. D.C. and in Boston. The MHA has several of his paintings including that of his brother, Dr. Arad Thompson.
- d) one of the largest collection of artifacts and photos of Middleborough's famous couple, Lavinia and Tom Thumb.
- e) original counters, bins, recording desk, and numerous artifacts from the P.H. Peirce & Co. Store.
- f) archival records of Middleborough's history including the original document relating to land sales in early 1700's.

Mold threatens to damage furnishings and collections. By having heat on during the

winter (thinking temperatures in the 50's) it would break the cycle of moisture condensation on the inside as the temperature warms up after winter cold.

Another problem with the lack of heat in these buildings, is the short time (only summer months) our volunteers have to work on the collections. Not only do the artifacts need to be rearranged for displays, put into storage for future displays and safe keeping, cleaned and repaired, catalog and index all records and files and to electronically archive the collections. In addition, the summer months are the busiest months because that is the only time the museum can be open for tours.

The MHA has looked into several grants to assist us in preserving our collections and museum. Unfortunately, one criteria that we have been unable to meet, is increasing the hours and days of the museum's operation due to no heat in the buildings.

Replacing the deteriorating single pane windows with energy efficient windows makes sense if we wish to have climate control buildings. The cost of the project would be prohibited without CPA funds. This project also makes good business sense for the town of Middleborough. I personally witnessed our out of town visitors the other day who had visited the museums on Jackson Street and had also dined at a local restaurant. The museum can be an all year attraction.

Estimates have just begun. One that we received as a rough figure. estimates approximately \$15,000 each building with oil or a total of \$30,000. No figures have come in yet on windows. Building #1 has 20 windows and building #2 has 26, not counting 4 little windows on second floor. Estimating \$200 a window, this would cost \$4,000 for building 1 and \$5,200 for a total of \$9,200. This might be a very low estimate. The MHA will need to do more ceiling work and put in insulation. Plastering walls and ceiling work would be about \$9,000. Insulation cost is unknown. The MHA will need to put out an appeal to raise these necessary projects as we have done in the past to generate the necessary funding for museum improvements. If funds are limited, one building could be tackled one year, with the hope additional funding would be raised the following year.