

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 heating and air conditioning systems, insulation as well as energy efficient windows. This will help preserve the collections and allow more hours/days of operation. TBA Architects will examine existing conditions (a study recommended by CPC and awarded funding at April's town meeting) and make recommendations as to best accomplish this project.

These two buildings are historically significant because they are what remains of the P.H. Peirce and Co. mill houses on Jackson Street. In fact, the town history states that a building of the original store on the site of the Peirce store 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 consists of seven buildings on Jackson St. in a village setting. The mill houses, built in 1820, were acquired from the town in 1961.

A little over five 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 borrowed for a year and placed 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, they also need to be put into storage for future displays and safe keeping, cleaned and repaired, catalog 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.

Estimates received the summer of 2012 provide some insight into our project cost. After information from several contractors concerning gas and oil heat, which would be very intrusive to the buildings space as well as very difficult to install, small electric units were suggested. Maintenance cost for Middleborough seem to be relatively low. We also looked at insulating ceilings, walls, and perimeter of basement, replacing windows with energy efficient windows. Building #1 would need ceiling work which has already been done in the other building. Estimates from last year projected heating units \$22,000, insulation of ceilings , \$6,000 insulation of exterior walls, \$6,600, insulation of basement \$10,000, and windows \$16,000. After the study, the MHA will have a better idea of what needs to be done. Recommendations may need to be prioritized as to what needs to be done first,

This project is for the two mill houses, but the MHA maintains seven buildings. Presently the Sproat Tavern outhouse is being rebuilt, and contractors are checking the blacksmith shop and the whistle house for re-roofing.

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.