



2007 Princeton Historical Commission Annual Report

The Princeton Historical Commission's primary focus in 2007 was the historic house plaque program initiated in the fall of 2006. Over forty requests for house plaques have been received, some of which are still in progress. Researching the history of each home in order to obtain as accurate a date of construction as possible has been a time-consuming challenge, and we are very thankful for the patience of our patrons. Our findings have come from a variety of sources such as property titles, tax records, vital records, genealogy records, the Princeton house card file and a wide range of documents collected and maintained by the Princeton Historical Society. We are extremely grateful to the Historical Society and the Library for accommodating us in our ongoing search. Due to the sometimes cryptic nature of 18th and 19th century deeds, the Commission enlisted the help of a professional title examiner. As a fund-raiser this program was not particularly successful since most of the funds raised went toward the title examiner's fees, however, we are very pleased with the wealth of information gathered.

With the support of the Cemetery Commission, conservation efforts at Meetinghouse Cemetery began in the fall of 2007. A request for a transfer of \$3,350 from the Town Common Capital Project for these efforts was approved at town meeting in May.

The first conservator contacted was intent on doing an inventory of the entire cemetery (prior to any repair work) at a cost of \$7,850. We were very pleased to find a conservator willing to work without a formal inventory, enabling us to put all available funds toward repairs. The Cemetery Commission provided an invaluable guide to the cemetery in the form of a professional land survey, at no cost. The first phase of repair work consisted of resetting nine stones that were leaning drastically and at risk of breaking. Three of the stones were provided with new bases. This first phase of work was performed under a \$1,000 contract. We are extremely grateful to the Princeton Highway Department for generously providing gravel for this project, which is critical to resetting the stones properly. The Commission is eager to address more at-risk stones in a second phase of work this year. We also plan to pursue a hands-on workshop for interested volunteers.

In February of 2007 the Commission was asked to respond to Environmental Notification Form for the builders of the proposed housing development on the Bentley property at Four Corners. Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act review procedures require input regarding historical aspects of proposed development sites and the Commission was eager to oblige. An extensive inventory of the Four Corners area was compiled and submitted to Massachusetts Historical Commission for determination of eligibility for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. In the fall of 2007, the Bentley

property was named one of the "Ten Most Endangered Historic Resources" by Preservation Massachusetts, a statewide non-profit organization committed to promoting the cultural and historic heritage of Massachusetts.

The most exciting development in 2007 for the Historic Commission was the enormously generous gift from the owner of the former Town Pound. Discussions with the owner of the Pound ended positively in December with the donation of this historic landmark. Princeton's Conservation Commission will assume responsibility for the two hundred and forty year-old structure. The Pound is accessible to visitors from Meetinghouse Cemetery.

Respectfully submitted,
Alexandra Fiandaca