Looking to the Future —
as we recreate an 18th Century Carriage House
by Bob Barth

First proposed by Richard Candee some 25 years ago, and several times approved by the Warner House Association Board, the project finally has legs and should become a reality within the near future.

The plan is to recreate the exterior of a 2 story, roughly 18 x 32 foot 18th/19th century structure torn down in the 1960s. The interior would be functional including:

FIRST FLOOR:
• ADA compliant handicap accessible restroom. The present restroom is situated on the second floor of the Warner House in direct line and view of the visitors’ tour. It is presently shut down four months of the year and is always a potential danger to leak. The new restroom would be accessible year-round and potentially allow us to open the first floor of the House to walkers and wheelchairs. The upper floors of the House could be experienced by video in the Carriage House Meeting Room.
• Multi-purpose room. This space we are calling the Meeting Room could accommodate the following:
  – Allow for hands-on activities (ex: archaeology) for visiting
This morning, April 27th, the garden volunteers were hard at work and Caroline Fesquet wrote:

“Garden volunteers working this morning. Lawns were mowed, fertilizer spread and some grass seed sown in bare spots. Also, critter repellent spread, and now we need some showers”.

Not yet May and the garden is already gorgeous.

Additionally, the young Franklin tree appears to have survived the winter and is budding nicely. Well worth re-reading, the following is an excerpt from a previous article written by Jeff Hopper:

“In September (2020), looking for a new tree, two of the gardeners, Caroline Fesquet and Trish Alexander, took a road trip to several local nurseries. They found the one they wanted at Rock Crest Gardens in Newfields, NH. In early October that tree, a Franklinia, or Franklin tree took its place in the garden. Eventually the tree will be about 25 feet tall and flower in the fall with white blooms as the leaves turn scarlet. It’s a very special tree that was native to the Altamaha River Valley in Georgia. Sometime in the early 19th century the tree became extinct in the wild, a victim of over-collection and disease attributed to the increased cultivation of the cotton plant.

The tree exists as a specimen plant due to the efforts of William Bartram who collected Franklin seeds between 1771 and 1776. He took them back to Philadelphia and by 1781 those seeds provided stock trees that successfully flowered. It is from this initial stock that all Franklin trees now descend. Both William and his father John, were noted botanists. William named the new tree Franklinia to honor his father’s close friendship with Benjamin Franklin.

With the early lightning rod on the west side of the house, it seems fitting that a Franklin tree sits on the east side of the house. The Portsmouth Garden Club donated the Franklin tree to the House and we cannot thank them enough for their generosity.”
Jeff Hopper is leaving as Director of Warner House after seven years. He has taken a full-time position in the business sector and his last day was April 14th. While we are very sad to see him go, we understand that we cannot compete with an offer of a full-time job with benefits.

Jeff has handled every level of challenge, from research on the British world of the 18th century to the proper way to install an exhibition in a fragile house. His previous work as a conservator made him the perfect person to monitor the condition of our murals on a regular basis. His degree from Harvard made it possible for him to do research in their libraries, which enriched our knowledge, particularly of Archibald Macphaedris, but also informed every exhibition we presented in our rooms.

He is a generous and gifted teacher, whether giving a tour of the house or explaining 18th century customs to us. Most recently, he, along with Sandra Rux, secured a Cares grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and through his efforts, we applied for a grant from the 1772 Foundation. We will hear in a few weeks if we were accepted for this grant. We are all grateful for what he has done for the Warner House. It will be difficult to replace him.

The Warner House would like to thank the following:

**BUSINESS SUPPORTERS:**

- Anne Whitney Architect
- Boston Conveyor & Automation, Inc.
- Ellis Insurance Agency
- Jewett Construction
- Phineas Graphic Design/Printing Solutions
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  - Northeast Auctions Fund
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Jeffrey Hopper in his home office. Courtesy photo.
This is an active and challenging time for the Warner House. In a relatively short period, we have had a change in the Chair from Jeff Thomson, we have lost Jeff Hopper as Director and we will soon lose Sandra Rux from the Board and as Treasurer.

Covid continues to make communication difficult and often frustrating. It is not easy to keep everyone in the loop and to maintain thoughtful decision processes. Fortunately there appears to be light at the end of the tunnel and increasingly we will be able to have in-person meetings. Thanks to Curt Springer for keeping us connected on Zoom, but it’s not the same as in person.

In spite of the obstacles, and thanks largely to Judy Groppa, Sandra Rux and Jeff Hopper, the House, its collections and their presentation have never been more spectacular. It always seems to go without saying, but in fact can’t be said often enough, that the work of the garden club is outstanding and the results are a great joy. Thank you, thank you!

Two exciting concurrent and complementary projects will, I believe, jointly help to send the Association into a future with expanded exposure and community involvement.

Through the generosity of Sandra Rux, in honor of her brother, the 1825 kitchen is being updated and restored to a more functional space to accommodate the store and mini-kitchen facilities to serve functions. At the same time we are moving ahead with plans to replicate the Carriage House with multipurpose interior as described on page 1 of this Newsletter.

Finally, we will be open on June 3 through Mid-October 2021. Our hours will be Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 11-4 throughout the season, observing Covid restrictions.

The outstanding glass exhibit, delayed for a year, will be on view thanks to the generosity of the lenders. It can be viewed by appointment by emailing the Warner House at info@warnerhouse.org.

We try to be a working Board, with all the frailties and shortcomings that entails. Should you have the time and inclination to become involved with one of our committees, please get in touch. Board membership is not a requirement.

Finally, we do implore you to become a member of the Association at any level. Your dollars are imperative to keeping this gift from the past alive, but as important to those who work so hard to keep the House to a high standard are the numbers who support our efforts as expressed through membership.

Do come in and enjoy this treasure.

Many thanks!

Maria Barth, Chair

SOME OBJECTS FROM THE BRILLIANCE EXHIBIT:
The order of objects is from the bottom, then up and finally to the left:
Object 2: Martin’s Margins, or Visual Glasses. Mid to late 18th century. English. The inset rim is composed of either horn, leather or wood. The rims, bridge and temples are metal. Glass lenses. Private collection.
Benning Wentworth, New Hampshire’s first Royal Governor, moved into the Macphaedris House, currently called Warner House, on December 12, 1741. The house was rented from his sister Sarah Wentworth Macphaedris Jaffrey.

It was Governor Wentworth’s strong desire to have the house become the official governor’s residence. In spite of his negotiations with the assembly, the purchase was never made because they would only allocate 2,000 pounds for the property and Sarah wanted 9,000 pounds.

On April 26, 1753 Benning Wentworth sent a message to the Assembly that he “had provided a house into which to move his furniture should the members wish to refurbish the Macphaedris House for the governor’s residence”.

The Governor and his wife moved to Little Harbor where their son John lived. When John died in 1759, Benning inherited the property and quickly added a large addition to the existing house. Included in the added rooms was a large Council Chamber for government meetings. This site is now called the Wentworth Coolidge Mansion.

Louise Penhallow Crane, daughter of Charles Sherburne Penhallow and the last living descendant to have slept in the Warner House, pictured on a recent visit to the Warner House in 2019.

Louise, a former board member, was accompanied by her daughter’s Elizabeth McCarter, Annie Kirby and current board member Mary Crane.

Louise loved her summer stays at the Warner House with her father and at age 96, plans to continue her annual summer visit to the Warner House with her family this June.
MEET THE CHAIR

Initially hoodwinked into acting as Secretary, Maria Barth now finds herself snookered into acting as interim Chair. A self-described dyslexic, octogenarian, runaway Swede (at least with a BA in American History), she does have many years of experience riding herd as Chair of unruly and dysfunctional Town Councils and School Boards in both Kittery and Durham. She can run a tight meeting, although from the accompanying image one can guess she would rather be dealing with a swarm of angry bees than disgruntled Board members. Thankfully, she vicariously enjoys a challenge and what could be more challenging than trying to help guide a single house museum through these trying times.

Her past interests have included raising a thousand persnickety species orchids, viewing in the wild most of New England’s 50+ wild orchid species, raising some homeless teen-agers through formative years and advocating for various causes which, while not always popular, would generally make the world a better place for most living creatures.

THE QUEST FOR BRILLIANCE IN GLASS

by Bob Barth

In the 4th quarter of the 17th century, through the efforts of George Ravenscroft, London, and others, Britain developed clear, colourless, high-content lead glass with strikingly improved refractivity and brilliance compared to Venetian glass which had previously dominated the European market in fine table-wares.

For the following century British lead-glass table wares predominated in the Colonies until shortly after the Revolution. A very few Colonial glasshouses (Caspar Wistar, Frederick Stiegel) produced some utilitarian and table-wares, predominantly from green non-leaded window glass.

With their high refractivity leaded table-wares, as well as mirrors, significantly added to the brightness of candlelight at the table. Around 1825, America added to the luminosity in glass when Demming Jarvis, at Sandwich, and others, developed “lacy” glass by the introduction of the creation of multiple, tiny, closely packed indentations in pressed, lead glass, further increasing refractivity.

The exhibit, “Brilliance: Early Glass in America, 1700 to 1850” will be at the Warner House from June 3 through Mid-October 2021. From the avid student to the casual observer, there will be over 300 objects for all to enjoy. Any individual or small group interested in an unhurried viewing of the exhibit is invited to contact us by phone or email. A curator will return your call to arrange an off-hours visit.
school groups who presently only experience a tour of the hands-off House.
– Video presentation, possibly to include family and Black history, visuals of cupola, M-roof, attic, 3rd floor, and much more.
  – Gallery for rotating exhibits.
  – Room for Lectures and Presentations.
  – Place to hold Warner House Association committee and Board meetings.
  – Space to stage garden rentals.

SECOND FLOOR:
Archaeology and curatorial processing work space and storage in a year-round work-friendly environment (the present in-House room for archaeology is too small, ill-lit, too cold in winter and hot in summer to be functional). Viewing venues for archaeological material. Storage and viewing of ceramic study collection. Decorative arts library.

A lot of plusses which will allow the Association greater outreach to the community and beyond in the future.

Now for the hard part—$$. The exact cost is currently being determined, but around $300,000 is a rough estimate.

The good news is that even before the Board voted to pursue the project 6 Board members pledged or donated $50,000 and the total is now $80,000 before any fundraising appeal, which is about to commence.

Obviously, we need friends of the Warner House to step up and support the project. Hopefully the generosity and enthusiasm of the Board might inspire a wider response. This is a unique opportunity to realize some pressing needs, as well as to expand exposure and participation for the future.
THE WARNER HOUSE ASSOCIATION
150 Daniel Street
P. O. Box 895
Portsmouth, New Hampshire 03802-0895

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