Weeks Brick House board sounds the alarm: Funds needed immediately for window project

Anonymous donor will match the first $5,000 in donations so work can begin this summer

By Tom Ayres, President, Weeks Brick House & Gardens

In 1710, Samuel Weeks (1670-1746), eldest son of Leonard Weeks (1633-1707) and a “grandpa” to many WBH members, completed building his brick house on the family farmstead in Greenland, New Hampshire. In 1975 the house and farmstead were rescued from subdivision and development by a hastily formed organization of Weeks descendants who boldly rose to the occasion.

Since then the house, among the earliest of brick in New England and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, has been maintained by our non-profit descendant organization – following the best practices in preservation – as well as our dwindling membership cash flow allows.

Now it is time for our descendants’ organization, Leonard Weeks and Descendants in America, Inc., to boldly rise to the occasion once more, this time to come up with the funds for Phase I of a two-part window preservation, repair, and storm window replacement project.

In recent months the Weeks Brick House board of directors has determined that a comprehensive

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When a flinty, pathologically self-reliant old Yankee asks for help, you know the situation must be serious

By Reginald W. Bacon, Editor, WBH Newsletter

Crusty Yankee. Yup. That’s me. Can’t help it. I’m descended from — and directly influenced by — a line of rugged northern Vermont mountain men. Woodbury, Vt. is where Charles Edson Weeks (1831-1900) trudged to in the 1850s, alone on foot except for a cow and a few chickens, after he slugged the farmer he was working for and departed New Hampshire for good.

(Don’t worry. Of the 10 children, 45 grandchildren, and later descendants of Charles, there were some respectable civilized folks among them. I don’t chew tobacco or carry a Bowie knife in my boot. And I haven’t thrown an ax in years.)

But here’s the problem. For the past 10-plus years, I have served on the board of the Weeks Brick House & Gardens. When “drafted” onto the board, I was glad to contribute whatever I could, as I work in the history, museum, and preservation field. As a former journalist, editor, and designer of publications, I gladly donated my skills to develop all the content for the new website; design interpretive materials, maps, and tours; and write The Visitor’s Guide to the Weeks Brick House & Gardens (2015). But did this old Yankee workaholic ever ask for help when projects sent me plummeting into a black hole of lost time? Of course not.

And as a fitness addict, I’ve always been happy to muster up for some healthy manual labor on WBH clean-up day … or trail maintenance day … or invasive species day … or for any other excuse to don my rattiest jeans and sweatshirt for a day of invigorating toil. But if I’m alone with a recalcitrant boulder and my trusty crow-bar, do I give up and go for help? Of course not.

At home I still push my old lawn mower around our expansive yard. When some of the newly-arrived 40-somethings in my Newburyport, Mass. neighborhood see my sweaty bedraggled self, they probably assume that I must be the hired “yard man” rather than the property owner. Have I ever sought hired yard help? Of course not.

In winter, I have not yet given in to getting a snowblower, although at 70-plus that day may be on the horizon. My wife and I clear every blizzard with human-powered snow shovels. This past winter, a nice young fellow (mid-40s?) from down the street came by with his shovel and offered to help me clear the long driveway in front of my two-car garage. Can you guess my response? Here it is: “Thanks! What a kind offer! But I’m more than half done, so everything’s under control. Thanks!”

Not only do I not ask for help, but I’m likely to wave it off even when it is kindly offered. Is this stubbornly independent behavior imbedded deep in my DNA?


And now to the present situation at the Weeks Brick House & Gardens. As detailed in the page-one article in this issue, we face a $25,000 window conservation project that is essential to responsible stewardship of our 1710 house. Thanks to longtime board member, craftsman, and project coordinator Steve Pike, whose deep knowledge of the house extends back through 30 years of selfless volunteering, our board has found every economy in breaking the project into two phases.

But simply put, we don’t have the money. Leonard Weeks and Descendants in America, Inc. did well to save the house from development in 1975. But in recent years our modest income from rent and membership fees – with much of that spent on emergency plumbing repairs – prevented the growth of a healthy “rainy day” fund.

This is where you – proud Weeks descendants – come in. So this is my personal, uncharacteristic “Big Ask”: Like so many before me, for years I’ve knocked myself out for the cause of Weeks Brick House preservation, never asking for help. Now I’m asking for members – including extended families of Weeks descendants … and our many friends in Greenland – to step up. With cash. Involvement. Board service. Grunt-work. No more sitting on the sidelines, folks. I and my fellow board members, past and present, did not devote our efforts to this historic house to see it sink into insolvency and become “Ye Olde Colonial Pizza House & Strip Mall.”

There, I’ve done it. This pathologically self-reliant Yankee was finally moved to ask for help. So the situation must be serious. Together let’s ensure the stability of the Weeks Brick House – and the organization – for generations into the future.
WBH grounds, gardens, & trails to get TLC at spring clean-up day & “work party” May 13

Volunteers are welcome to join us to spiff up the venerable farmstead property for a new season

Every spring, usually in May, members and community friends of the Weeks Brick House & Gardens convene at the old family farmstead in Greenland, not to frolic around a maypole, but to dive into a day of grunt-work so that the winter-ravaged grounds, gardens, and trails are returned to an acceptable state of presentability.

Although in recent years the cohort of grunt-workers has been comprised mostly of the aging men and women of your WBH board, this is by no means an exclusive club. We will warmly welcome to our ranks any relative youths (say, under 70?) who can still heave-and-haul, hammer-and-hoist, weed-and-hoe, and stoop-without-a-droop.

The prioritized task list is still being formulated, but it generally includes: (1) weeding the herb and vegetable garden beds, (2) weeding the planting beds along the rear walkway, (3) hauling the weeded plant matter to a remote composting area, (4) spreading bark mulch around selected trees and the walkway planting beds, (5) pruning trees on the grounds and hauling away branches, and (6) clearing fallen trees and branches from the walking trails.

If you would like to help at our spring clean-up day on May 13, contact us at weeksbrickhouse@aol.com. Pull on the boots, load up some tools, and come join the fun.

Can you put your “boots on the ground”? If you want to help out on the Weeks Brick House & Gardens clean-up day, pull on the boots, leave the flip-flops for July, and join us for a fun and sociable work party on May 13.

Weeks Brick House & Gardens Annual Meeting invites descendants & friends Sept. 14-15, 2019

Weeks family descendants, members, non-members, community friends, trail walkers, architecture enthusiasts, genealogy researchers, and history buffs are all invited to join us Sept. 14-15, 2019 at the farmstead in Greenland for the annual meeting of the Weeks Brick House & Gardens.

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Each year the annual meeting features house and garden tours, trail walks, social events, genealogy networking, a guest speaker, and the opportunity to walk in the footsteps of ancestors. So mark your calendar now, and then watch your mailbox for our schedule and registration flyer.

Above is a panoramic group photo of a Weeks Brick House & Gardens annual meeting from the 1990s. Of course this prompts the question: “Where did everybody go?” Has the Weeks family birth rate slowed that much? Let’s make an effort to get far-flung family members to the 2019 Weeks Brick House annual meeting so we can round up everyone for an updated panoramic photo.

www.WeeksBrickHouse.org

Weeks Brick House & Gardens Member/Donor Form
(Use this handy form for donations … or for new membership!)

Name: _________________________________

Address: ________________________________

City/Town: ____________________________ State: _______ Zip: ______________

Phone: ___________________________ E-mail: __________________

Please indicate your preference: □ E-mail newsletter in PDF format □ Hard-copy postal mail newsletter

Please return this form with payment to: Weeks Brick House & Gardens, P. O. Box 93, Greenland, NH 03840. Thank You!

Membership Dues Categories:
□ $15 Student/Senior
□ $25 Individual □$50 Family
□ $100 Contributing □ $250 Sustaining
□ $500 Leader □ $1000 Visionary
□ $________ to the Garden Fund
□ $________ to the General House Preservation & Maintenance Fund

TOTAL ENCLOSED: $ ____________
Weeks Brick House board sounds the alarm:
Funds needed immediately for window project

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window preservation project has risen to top priority, as follows:

- All 25 window frames and sashes need various degrees of repair and paint.
- The 21 aluminum-framed storm windows (c. 1970?) need an upgraded replacement.
- Two exterior entrance doors and door frames need repair and paint.
- The wooden gutters on the front and back of the house need proper conservation treatment and paint.

The cost of this project – to address the first preservation duty to “seal the envelope” from the weather – is $25,000.

Due to our limited maintenance funds on hand, the WBH board has decided to complete these repairs in two phases. The first phase (lower windows, entrance doors, and gutters) is planned for this summer (2019) at a cost of $13,000. The remaining repairs (upper windows, requiring an onsite lift) will be scheduled for spring/summer 2020.

Obviously, the funding for this project is critical. We have an anonymous donor who will match, dollar-for-dollar, up to $5,000 for these repairs. We are grateful for that donor’s show of leadership. At present, the WBH board is enabling multiple ways to accept donations, as follows:

The first phase (lower windows, entrance doors, and gutters) is planned for this summer (2019) at a cost of $13,000. The repairs to the upper windows will be scheduled for 2020.

“Seal the envelope.”
It’s priority #1 in historic house preservation

At right is a view of the Weeks Brick House in a photo taken after a snowfall this winter. The frames and sashes of the 25 first-floor and second-floor windows are in need of varying degrees of repair. The 1970s-era aluminum-frame storm windows are in need of replacement and upgrade, as they were already more than 20 years old at the last “Windows 2000” window conservation project – in 2000.

DONATE TODAY at www.WeeksBrickHouse.org

www.WeeksBrickHouse.org

- A handy hard-copy, on-paper, double-duty membership/donation form is on page 3 of this and every newsletter, so you can send a check in any amount by postal mail.
- Donations of any amount can be made online via Paypal at the “Donate & Shop” page or the “Membership” page of the WBH website, www.weeksbrickhouse.org.
- For up-to-the-minute notice of other ways to donate online – currently being explored – visit us on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/WeeksBrickHouse/.

The future of the Weeks Brick House depends on the support of active and interested members. Can we count on your donation to preserve “Grandpa” Sam Weeks’ historic house?