When the workday was done, your editor still had enough energy in reserve to press the button on the camera a few more times. The scene at right — from the vantage point of the old Weeks Avenue — was green and glorious in person and in the full-color photo. In the late afternoon sun, the scene was proof that we made good progress, even though much work remains.

Would you like to be a garden volunteer? Contact the Weeks Brick House & Gardens by phone at 603-436-8147, or by email at weeksbrickhouse@aol.com.

All-day manual labor defines “working board”

On Wednesday, May 10, 2017, a team of eight Weeks Brick House volunteers devoted a long day of healthy manual labor to shaping up the grounds and gardens around the 1656 Weeks family farmstead and 1710 brick house in Greenland, N.H.

From Connecticut came WBH&G board president Tom Ayres and vice president Skip Weeks — with pickup truck and chainsaw. From Massachusetts came board member Reg Bacon — with more than enough shovels and rakes for each hand and foot. Board members Cynthia Weeks Smith and Amanda Nelson brought their usual resolve that no garden weed would escape their assault. Board member and master of the physical world Steve Pike rolled his “tool central” truck into place, packed with enough specialized implements to reshape the universe. Local Weeks Brick House friends Mark Willis and Kate Weeks White added their considerable energy to the team. (See photos on Pg. 3.)

Priorities for the day were tree pruning, garden weeding, and mulch spreading. Of course the garden and grounds demand constant care, but the spring work day was a fine start to the 2017 season.

Mark Hopkins estate saga resurfaces with study of old case files

A 19th-century mystery that involved hundreds of individuals, millions of dollars, opportunism, fraud, and a tangled web of court cases has resurfaced with discovery of files that reveal Weeks family interest in the settlement of the estate of railroad magnate Mark Hopkins (1813-1878).

In early 2017, WBH board president Tom Ayres received from Weeks descendant and WBH member Rebecca W. S. More a trove of letters, notes, family trees, and news clippings from 1928 to 1946 that detail the Mark Hopkins estate fiasco: Were Family Records Erased? Planned Gifts: A Lasting Impact Thank You for Membership Support A Work Day Photo Montage Membership Form

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Spring Work Day Report

Annual Meeting Sept. 16-17, 2017

The Mark Hopkins Estate Fiasco: Were Family Records Erased?

Planned Gifts: A Lasting Impact

Thank You for Membership Support

A Work Day Photo Montage

Membership Form

Annual Meeting set for Sept. 16 & 17

You can mark your calendar now, as the Weeks Brick House Annual Meeting Weekend dates are set for Saturday & Sunday, September 16 & 17, 2017.

At every Annual Meeting Weekend, Weeks descendants from near-and-far, local history enthusiasts, lovers of early American domestic architecture, and Portsmouth/Greenland area friends join us for tours of the house and grounds, walks on our trails, and special programs.

Featured this year is a Saturday visit to the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion (1750) in Portsmouth, N.H. At this writing, other activities are not yet final. When firm, details will be posted at www.WeeksBrickHouse.org, and members will receive a hard-copy notice and registration form. Mark your calendar for September 16 & 17, 2017.

Mid-May clean-up day is energetic head start on grooming grounds & gardens for Annual Meeting
Secure the future of the Weeks Brick House & Gardens with your planned gift that will make a lasting impact

Are you considering adding your support to the Weeks Brick House & Gardens for the long term? Consider charitable giving through planned gifts, as they make a lasting impact. The following introduction to the topic, which is adapted from a generic overview used by other similarly situated non-profit organizations, explains the various types of planned giving:

Bequest. A bequest is a gift of money or property left by will or trust. A bequest can be unrestricted or designated to a specific area of interest. The benefits are that bequests are simple to implement and can be altered over a lifetime, and may reduce estate taxes. They also do not diminish current assets.

Life-income gift. In this approach, one can make a gift, receive income for life, and receive generous tax benefits. Options include charitable gift annuities, charitable remainder trusts, and “give-it-twice” trusts.

Securities: Stocks, Bonds, & Mutual Funds. These are generally deductible at full value if they have been owned for more than a year. Benefits are that (1) no tax is owed on the capital gain resulting from the sale of securities; (2) securities that have increased in value can bring additional tax savings; and (3) investments that are worth less than their cost can be sold, and the cash proceeds can be used to make a charitable gift for a charitable deduction, offsetting capital gain income.

Life insurance. One can name the Weeks Brick House & Gardens as an owner or beneficiary of a policy. If there are remaining premium payments, annual gifts to the Weeks Brick House & Gardens could cover the costs of the premium, which would be tax deductible. Types of insurance include a paid-up life insurance policy (One can deduct the cash value of the policy at the time of the gift); or a new policy (One can establish the policy, then transfer ownership to the WBH&G.)

Of course, for comprehensive information about any of the above options, and for specific advice in your best interests, consult your trusted professional financial advisers.

Thank you to ‘annual members’ and ‘life members’ for your support

We couldn’t last without you … and we need more of you!

A big Thank You is extended to our annual dues-paying members for 2017:

Mr. Thomas Ayres
Ms. Frances Barger
Mr. Harry Bishop
Mr. & Mrs. James & Sharon Broadhead
Mr. & Mrs. Frank & Karen Carnevale
Ms. Theresa Chase
Mr. Nicholas A. Davidge
Mr. & Mrs. James & Diane Day
Ms. Paula B. Doisneau
Mr. Peter O. Frisch
Mr. & Mrs. Robert & Pamela Guthrie
Ms. Nancy Hallsall
Ms. Ethel Hamilton
Mr. & Mrs. Eldon & Sharon Harzman
Ms. Myrde Hergemueller
Mr. Paul F. Hughes
Ms. Virginia B. LaPointe
Ms. Rita Lingg
Ms. Marlene LoTurco
Ms. Ruth Mahler
Ms. Rebecca More
Ms. Amanda Nelson
Mr. Fred Oetzman
Mr. James O’Kane
Mr. Charles Parker
Mr. Jeffrey C. Parker
Ms. Carol Pugh
Mr. & Mrs. Nathan & Carolyn Smith
Ms. Susan Teich
Ms. Christine Weeks
Mr. Douglas G. Weeks

… and we need more of you!

Ms. Elinor E. Weeks
Ms. Jane E. Weeks
Mr. Kenneth Weeks III
Ms. Lorraine Weeks
Mr. Norman Weeks
Mr. & Mrs. Ralph & Lucie Weeks
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen & Mary Weeks
Mr. Robert E. Weeks
Mr. Robert M. Weeks
Mr. Robert N. Weeks
Mr. Skip Weeks
Ms. Susan C. Weeks
Ms. Catherine Wescott
Ms. Norma Wotton

An extra-special Thank You is extended to our life members:

Mr. & Mrs. Robert Bast
Mrs. Nancy Jones
Mr. & Mrs. Terry Langan
Mrs. Betsy K. Smith
Mr. Patrick Smith
Mrs. Frederick Stam
Mr. Walter Thorn
Mr. & Mrs. Donald E Weeks
Mr. Francis D. Weeks
Mr. Frank E. Weeks
Dr. & Mrs. George R. Weeks
Mr. & Mrs. John W. Weeks (Seattle, Wash.)
Mrs. John W. Weeks (Belmont, Mass.)
Miss Marcy Weeks
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen D. Weeks
Mr. & Mrs. William W. Weeks
Mr. Everett Mathias Weeks, Jr.
Mr. Kenneth W. Weeks, Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Sinclair Weeks, Jr.
Mrs. Kitty Weeks White
Weeks Brick House & Gardens Membership Form

(Use this handy form 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!

Make check payable in U.S. currency to “Weeks Brick House.” All gifts are tax deductible. Thank You!

**Grounds & Gardens Work Day at the Weeks Brick House**

The WBH “working board” answers the call to duty on Wednesday, May 10, 2017

Skip Weeks and his chainsaw give Mother Nature a helpful assist.

Amanda Nelson & Cynthia Weeks Smith demonstrate synchronized stooping.

Winter’s detritus yields to relentless raking of Kate Weeks White.

Cynthia Weeks: Tireless!

Tom Ayres & Mark Willis attack the mulch pile.

Steve Pike artfully mulching.

Tom Ayres attacks another massive mulch pile.

Skip Weeks is the master of manly work in the meadow with chainsaw and pickup truck.

At day’s end: Gardens and grounds are ready for spring. (Photos by R.W. Bacon)

www.WeeksBrickHouse.org

**Membership Dues Categories:**

- □ $15 Student/Senior
- □ $25 Individual □ $50 Family
- □ $100 Contributing
- □ $250 Sustaining □ $500 Leader
- □ $_______ to the Chimney Fund
- □ $_______ to the Garden Fund

**TOTAL ENCLOSED:** $__________
efforts to establish Weeks family members as among legal heirs to the Hopkins fortune. The files were collected and assembled by Eva Lash Weeks (1885-1965) of Lewiston, Maine. Our WBH board president began a study of both the Weeks family material and the estate case. His project culminated in a 25-page report that concluded there is no hard evidence connecting any of the Weeks family to the Mark Hopkins fortune. Yet the report sheds light on an alternately fantastic and pathetic story worth sharing here.

Mark Hopkins was born Sept. 1, 1813 in Henderson, N.Y. — although some still-circulating family trees claim he was born in Virginia or North Carolina. Prompted by the excitement of the Gold Rush, he arrived in California in 1849. When mining proved unprofitable, Hopkins started a grocery business. Successful in this line, he partnered with other entrepreneurs with a vision for a transcontinental railroad. In 1861 he was one of the “Big Four” founders of the Central Pacific Railroad, with Collis Huntington, Charles Crocker, and Leland Stanford. He became fabulously wealthy, and when he died in 1878, his net worth was more than $20 million — about $500 million in today’s dollars. The root of the controversy to come was that, according to flimsy theories that gained traction in later decades, his business partners depended too heavily on Hopkins’ wealth, and the railroad enterprise would be at risk if the Hopkins estate was divided among his heirs.

The theories advanced the belief that the partners waged an all-out effort, legal and illegal, to block distribution of the estate, fog the biographical and genealogical record, and thereby secure control of the fortune.

Decades after the death of Mark Hopkins, multiple fabrications about his origins complicated the story — a story that became an obsession for several authors.

In 1938, historian Oscar Lewis (1893-1992) wrote *The Big Four*, still the most authoritative work on the rise of the California railroad barons in the late 19th century. In 1963, Estelle Cothran Latta (1898-1982), after years of advancing her conspiracy theory, wrote *Controversial Mark Hopkins*, and claimed the Hopkins family had roots in Scotland, and were in Vermont before moving to North Carolina. In 2007, June Naugle wrote *The Great American Swindle*, a novelistic story of Estelle Latta’s 50-year campaign for her piece of the pie.

It appears that the efforts in the late 1920s by the Weeks family in Maine were based on the belief that Mark Hopkins was the son of Benjamin Hopkins (b. 1770 in Newcastle, Maine) and Nancy Crow (of Crow Creek, S.C.), and the grandson of David Hopkins (1726-1797). Supposedly David Hopkins was born in Maine, moved with his two sons to North Carolina, dropped out of sight for 18 years, then rejoined his wife, Jane, in Maine before he died. Their daughter, Hannah Hopkins (b. 1771), married Winthrop Weeks (1770-1856). Their children would have been first cousins to railroad baron Mark Hopkins.

The “evidence”? In a 1929 letter from a Herbert Weeks discussing the findings of a California lawyer, James H. Longden, who solicited funds from the family to move the case forward, he wrote: “The Carolina family records resemble our records so closely that we feel they must be the same family.”

Through the 1920s, courts routinely tossed out claims to the long-settled estate. One judge blamed lawyers for perpetrating “a country-wide swindle.” Weeks family efforts appear to cease in 1946 — before they could become prey to Estelle Latta’s sales pitch promising a share of the Hopkins estate if she won her case. (The SEC issued a permanent injunction against her solicitations in 1965.)

It appears that the real story is that Mark Hopkins, son of Mark Hopkins, Sr. and Anastasia Kellogg of Jefferson Cty., N.Y., married Mary Frances Sherwood (1818-1891) in 1854. They had no children. After the death of Mark Hopkins, she inherited his fortune. She also adopted a son, whom she later disowned. In 1887 she married architect and decorator Edward Francis Searles (1841-1920), who was completing the Hopkins mansion on Nob Hill in San Francisco. They moved to Methuen, Mass., where Mary Frances died in 1891. Edward used his inherited fortune to collaborate with architect Henry Vaughn on a series of castle-like homes across New England. Searles Castle in Windham, N.H. is just 40 miles from the Weeks Brick House — a fascinating connection to the fortune of Mark Hopkins, even if his money never fattened any Weeks family bank accounts.