Arduous trail work and garden prep were the focus this spring at the Weeks Brick House ‘work party’

It was tons of fun ... and tons of material-moving ... at May 22 work day

On Tuesday, May 22, 2018, a small, shrinking, but still energetic team of Weeks Brick House volunteers gathered to shape up the grounds and gardens around the 1710 brick house in Greenland, N.H.

From Connecticut came Tom (WBH president) and Marcia Ayres, also conveying a recent donation to the Weeks Brick House (see page 2). Also arriving from central Connecticut was WBH vice president Skip Weeks. From nearby Massachusetts came board member Reg Bacon. From closer proximity came board members Cynthia Weeks Smith, Amanda Nelson, and Steve Pike. All arrived with more tools than hands, ready to meet any challenge in re-shaping the landscape or taming vegetation.

More important than tools or hands was a plan of action for this convergence of labor. And thanks once again to Steve Pike, the plan was in place to make the most of everyone’s time, availability, and capability.

Museum tour and legendary craftsman highlight Annual Meeting Sept. 15-16, 2018

Strawberry Banke tour & Richard Irons presentation are not to be missed!

Mark your calendar today, for the Weeks Brick House Annual Meeting Weekend on Saturday & Sunday, September 15 & 16, 2018.

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 are two attractions for which the stars finally aligned. After several years of schedule conflicts, this year attendees will enjoy two special programs.
Descendant donates 18th-century John Weeks chairs to the Weeks Brick House family artifacts collection

A generous donation to the Weeks Brick House & Gardens family artifact collection was delivered by WBH board president Tom Ayres on the morning of the spring work day, May 22, 2018.

In July 2017 the Descendants of Leonard Weeks in America, Inc. was contacted by Weeks family descendant Gay Weeks Neale of Broadnax, Va., who proposed to donate to the Weeks Brick House four c. 1780s side chairs passed down in her family line from Satchell Weeks (1828-1915) of Wakefield, N.H. The WBH board reviewed descriptions and photos of the chairs and unanimously agreed to accept the donation.

In April 2018, Tom and Marcia Ayres, on their return from wintering in Florida, picked up the chairs, and also enjoyed the hospitality of Gay Weeks Neale at her Oak Shade Farm in Broadnax, Va.

The rushing seats on two of the chairs have been restored, while two are possibly in original condition. The original paint is intact. The chairs are a fine addition to the artifacts in the Weeks Brick House Great Room, and we thank Gay Weeks Neale for the donation.

Above is the set of four late 18th-century Weeks family chairs donated to the Weeks Brick House & Gardens by Gay Weeks Neale of Broadnax, Va. The seats of the two chairs on the right are said to be in their original state, while the two on the left were restored at some point in their existence. The inset photo shows some of the original decorative paint detail.

Paul F. Hughes (1934-2018): Greenland historian and longtime friend of the Weeks Brick House

Paul F. Hughes, Greenland historian and longtime friend of the Weeks Brick House, died on May 8, 2018 at the age of 83.

The son of the late Paul C. and Anna (Leary) Hughes, he grew up in Greenland. Although not particularly interested in history as a young man, he eventually became steeped in the local history through his father’s research.

Paul graduated from Portsmouth High School, Phillips Exeter Academy, and Boston College before immersion in a 32-year career with the National Security Agency in Washington, D.C.

A founding member of the Greenland Historical Society along with his parents, Paul and his father both pursued in-depth research on Greenland town history. With the advantage of living near research repositories in Washington like the Library of Congress and the National Archives, Paul was able to explore sources that were unavailable locally. After his retirement in 1991, he returned to his hometown to compile his father’s and his own research, and complete A Pleasant Abiding Place, a comprehensive multi-volume history of Greenland from 1635 through 2000. The original manuscript is held by the Weeks Public Library.

Paul also wrote articles for Historical New Hampshire, the journal of the New Hampshire Historical Society, and was a sought-after speaker. He was recognized as Greenland’s Citizen of the Year in 2016.

Survivors include cousins Robin C. Hughes of Greenland; Carolyn H. Marshall of Hudson, N.H.; Bette C. Owens of Stratham, N.H.; and Donna L. Stowell of Roseville, Calif. Services are private.

Donations in his memory can be made to the Weeks Public Library, P. O. Box 430, Greenland, NH 03840.
May 22 was ‘(work) party time’ on the WBH grounds, gardens, & trails

Enjoy just a few views of the ‘party animals’ in action on Tuesday, May 22, 2018

Also present and engaged in hard labor on May 22 – but whose efforts unfortunately eluded capture by your editor’s camera – were Tom Ayres and Skip Weeks, who each made the trip from Connecticut.

Steve Pike has good reason to be pleased – the job is done!

Cynthia Weeks & Marcia Ayres commune with the soil.

Amanda Nelson instructs the plants to stay healthy and grow.

Steve Pike inspects the work. Nobody was fired.

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Amanda Nelson deliberates on placement. (Photos by R.W. Bacon)

Steve Pike strikes the Superman pose after a hard day’s work.

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Annual Meeting Sept. 15 & 16 …

On Saturday, Sept. 15 is a guided group tour of Strawbery Banke Museum in Portsmouth, N.H., the 10-acre museum comprised of 32 historic buildings, gardens, and craft demonstrations that interprets early New England life in the New Hampshire seacoast region. The 90-minute guided tour (1:00 to 2:30 p.m.) is limited to 15 people, so those interested should register without delay. The cost is only $10 per person, and is payable on-site at the time of the tour.

On Sunday, Sept. 16 the Annual Meeting guest speaker is Richard Irons, New England’s foremost restoration mason. At 10 a.m. in the Great Room of the 1710 Weeks Brick House, he will present an illustrated program on the conservation and restoration of antique masonry, followed by a tour of the brick-and-mortar conditions and features of our 1710 house. This is an opportunity to absorb the wisdom of a master craftsman who has been the first choice to restore the brickwork at many of our nation’s most revered historic structures – including at the Weeks Brick House.

In addition to the two featured programs, on Saturday afternoon attendees can enjoy tours of the house, the colonial-inspired herb gardens, and the wooded walking trails at the far reaches of the 1656 Weeks family farmstead. In between, our gift shop will be open, stocked with Weeks-related items, and our Silent Auction items will be on display and ready for bids.

From 5-7 p.m. on Saturday, join friends and Weeks family cousins old-and-new at the Wine & Cheese Social in the gardens, where the most generous bidders can ramp up the celebration of their Silent Auction winnings. (Advance registration is required.)

On Sunday, Sept. 16, early birds can get a head start at the gift shop and on house-and-garden tours at 9 a.m., in advance of the Richard Irons presentation and tour from 10 to 11:30 a.m.

At noon on Sunday is the Annual Meeting lunch, held across Rte. 33 at the Greenland Church Parish Hall. (Advance registration required.) The weekend concludes with the annual member business meeting at 1 p.m.

To register for the Annual Meeting weekend, the museum tour, the wine & cheese social, and the Sunday lunch, visit the Weeks Brick House website at www.WeeksBrickHouse.org, download and print the registration form, fill out the form, and send the form with payment to the Weeks Brick House & Gardens, P. O. Box 93, Greenland, NH 03840. A separate “reminder” mailing will follow to members that includes the Annual Meeting registration form as well as a proxy voting form.

Whether you are a new-found cousin, or a returning attendee drawn back like a magnet to the 350-year-old farmstead, we look forward to seeing you in September!■

WBH spring ‘work party’ …

Projects for this “work party” were comparatively few this year, but, perhaps because one project required all the brute-force effort at hand. The needs of the herb and vegetable gardens, as well as the shrubbery and trees around the house, of course, are a constant every year. Therefore Amanda, Cynthia, Marcia, and Tom were immersed in a day of weeding, mulching, pruning, and planting. Not to mention all the attendant hauling.

Meanwhile, Steve, Reg, and Skip loaded up and struck out for the wooded Marsh Trail to repair a lowland foot-bridge. This involved hauling – by human muscle power only – five 16-foot 4x6 beams into the woods, stumbling over roots and rocks to the bridge site. The subsequent hauling of the chain saws, axes, sledge-hammers, crow-bars, hand-tools, battery-operated power tools, and additional assorted lumber was a “picnic” in comparison. (Editor’s note: I skipped my four-mile run that night.)

The aged, rotting timbers on the old bridge were removed, and the new pressure-treated 16-footers were positioned and secured in place with remarkable precision, considering the non-engineered site conditions. The new bridge will be safe and secure for years to come.

In all, the day was a fine start to the season at the Weeks Brick House & Gardens. ■