



NEWBURYPORT  
PRESERVATION TRUST

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www.nbptpreservationtrust.org

Linking the past with the present and future



Quarterly Newsletter of the Newburyport Preservation Trust

Fall 2013

## Powder House restoration project wins national award from American Association for State & Local History

*Award ceremony at AASLH conference in Birmingham, Alabama*

The Newburyport Preservation Trust's efforts to preserve the city's formerly crumbling 1822 Powder House have been recognized with an Award of Merit from the American Association for State & Local History (AASLH).

The award for the Powder House preservation is one of 88 Leadership in History Awards conferred this year by AASLH, honoring people, projects, exhibits, books, and organizations that represent the best work in their respective fields. Project co-chair Karen Holt of Newburyport, who has worked with co-chair Tom Kolterjahn on the project, will accept the award at a ceremony at the AASLH Annual Meeting on Sept. 20 in Birmingham, Alabama.



**Powder House preservation.** Planning for the Powder House Park and Learning Center, located on Godfrey's Hill off Low Street, Newburyport, began in 2003, with the small committee devoting the first several years to research – and to navigating necessary administrative and procedural processes. Physical restoration of the distinctive 60-foot diameter building began in earnest in 2009, and the Powder House opened with a formal dedication ceremony in fall 2012. Since then, the site has welcomed hundreds of visitors at Trails & Sails events, at a Yankee Homecoming

Open House, and in hosting numerous school group visits. While restoration of the building is complete, work remains to be done on the grounds, including a detailed survey of the original cobblestone wagon path, and park landscaping.

**A brief history of the Powder House.** The 1822 Powder House, built in the aftermath of the War of 1812, and located a safe distance from homes of the era, was used to store gunpowder, flints, musket balls, and camp kettles used by the local militia. In those years every town was required to maintain a militia and a safe place to store munitions. Research has determined that gunpowder from the newly-established DuPont de Nemours Co. in Delaware was shipped to Newburyport via coastal schooners. Gunpowder served many purposes beyond defense, as it was useful for road and canal building, land clearing, quarrying, and bridge-building. Newburyport's Powder House was well-used during the Civil War, but fell into disuse in the latter decades of the 19th century. After nearly a century of

*Continued on page 2*

### Visit the Powder House at Trails & Sails Sept. 22 & 29

Visit and see the award-winning Powder House restoration on September 22 & 29 as part of the county-wide Trails & Sails events coordinated by Essex National Heritage. Learn about the role of the 1822 Powder House, enjoy a tour, and on Sept. 22, see a Civil War encampment and watch a master cooper at work. Admission is free. (The Powder House was a Trails & Sails "Peoples Choice" award winner in 2012.) Powder House Park is at Godfrey's Hill off Low St., Newburyport, across from the Nock Middle School. Parking is at the school lot or the Newburyport Emergency Management lot.

**Sunday, Sept. 22, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.** (Musket firing demonstrations at 1:30 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.; Civil War encampment; keg-making demonstrations through the afternoon.)

**Sunday, Sept. 29, 1 p.m. - 4 p.m.** (Musket firing demonstrations at 1:30 p.m. & 3:30 p.m.)

### Join us at our Annual Meeting Sunday, Oct. 6; NPT issues a call for additional board members

**Join us at NPT's Annual Meeting on Sunday, Oct. 6, 4 p.m., at Powder House Park & Learning Center.** You'll be able to get the latest reports on NPT activities, vote on new board members, and celebrate the national recognition of the Powder House.

**NPT seeks additional board members.** Each year The Newburyport Preservation Trust looks for new members to serve on its board of directors. The board oversees NPT activities and provides direction and strategy for the future. We seek board members with diverse backgrounds and skills. We now have eight board members,

and would like to increase it to nine. We ask that you, as members, look at your interests and those of others you know, and provide us with names of people you think are suitable for NPT board service.

**Nominations will be taken until the end of September.** The nomination committee will consider all, and present any selected at the NPT Annual Meeting on October 7 at Powder House Park & Learning Center, to be voted on by the members.

**Nominations may be submitted** by e-mail at [npt@nbptpreservationtrust.org](mailto:npt@nbptpreservationtrust.org). Thank you for your thought and input.

# HABS survey to begin this fall at Powder House

*Measured drawings, photos, & research reports destined for Library of Congress*

This fall Newburyport's 1822 Powder House will be the subject of a Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS), with the resulting documentation taking its place among surveys of America's architectural heritage at the U.S. Library of Congress.

The Powder House, which has been an ongoing restoration project of the Newburyport Preservation Trust, was selected for the study by Robert W. Ogle, Director of Historic Preservation at Boston Architectural College's School of Design Studies.

Throughout the fall semester, students from Boston Architectural College will document the Powder House through measured drawings, photo studies, and historic research reports. Johanna Rowley of the BAC faculty will direct the student team and manage the project.

Upon completion, the survey will be added to the permanent public domain HABS resources held at the U.S. Library of Congress. The survey will also be entered into competition for the Charles E. Peterson Prize, which recognizes student excellence in measured drawings created to HABS standards. Charles E. Peterson (1906-2004),

## School groups visit Powder House Park & Learning Center

Since the opening of Powder House Park & Learning Center in September 2012, it has become a destination for school groups.



Above right is a visiting class from River Valley Charter School in Newburyport. At bottom center and far right, two students show their interpretations of the Powder House. At top center, RVCS student **Sonny Knight** returns to the Powder House after his school visit to donate a flint nodule and two musket balls. Receiving the donation is Powder House Committee Co-Chair **Tom Kolterjahn**.

conceived the HABS program in 1933, and is regarded as the founding father of the preservation architecture profession.

The Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) program began in the 1930s with the documentation of the country's earliest architectural heritage, and today comprises drawings, photos, and written reports on

over 38,000 historic structures across the U.S. Along with the Historic American Engineering Record (HAER) and the Historic American Landscapes Survey (HALS), the program is administered by the National Parks Service, with archives held by the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress.

## Powder House award ...

*Continued from page 1*

abandonment, overgrowth, and vandalism, the building received some attention as the 1976 Bicentennial approached. But a plaque alone did not repel the wind and water

from the deteriorating structure. It took the leadership of the Powder House Committee in more recent years to make the current state of preservation a reality.

**About AASLH.** The American Association for State and Local History awards program was initiated in 1945 to establish and encourage standards of excellence in the collection, preservation, and interpretation of state and local history throughout the United States. AASLH is a non-profit professional organization of individuals and institutions working to preserve and promote history. From its headquarters in Nashville, Tennessee, AASLH provides leadership, service, and support for its members who preserve and interpret state and local history in order to make the past more meaningful in American society. Especially valuable to professionals in the museum, history, and preservation fields, AASLH publishes books, technical publications, a quarterly magazine, and monthly newsletter. The association also sponsors regional and national training workshops and an annual meeting. For more information about AASLH, visit [www.aaslh.org](http://www.aaslh.org).

## Words not necessary ...

R.I.P.:  
The James Carey House (1823-2013)

