

Greater Portland Landmarks Annual Report ~ 2006-07

2007 WAS A BANNER YEAR for Greater Portland Landmarks and the Portland Observatory, the city's signature landmark. Captain Lemuel Moody built the Observatory in 1807 to sight ships coming into Portland Harbor and to announce their arrival using colorful signal flags. Today, the Observatory is a National Historic Landmark, the only known remaining historic maritime signal tower in the United States. Not only has GPL stewarded and provided educational tours of tower for the past 25 years, but in 2007 GPL orchestrated a series of events celebrating its 200th anniversary standing proudly overlooking Portland Harbor.

Celebrating the Portland Observatory's 200th Anniversary

The 200th anniversary celebrations opened at the tower on June 14th with the annual **Flag Day** festivities inviting the community for a full day of free tours and related activities at the Observatory. Over 900 visitors

Bjorn Swenson, Manager of Education Programs coordinated all the planning and implementation for GPL's 200th Anniversary of the Observatory. The celebrations are sponsored by Margaret Burhham Charitable Trust, Coffee By Design, Geo's Patisserie, Daniel T. Haley Insurance, Inc., Morton Kelly Charitable Trust, Portland Press Herald, Rines-Thompson Fund of the Maine Community Foundation, Shipyard Brewing, the Phineas W. Sprague Memorial Foundation, and Whole Foods.

Fiddlehead Center for the Arts of New Gloucester and Scarborough orchestrated Picture This!, a day of activities with a theme of Portland's tradition of fine art and history. Area artists created works inspired by the Observatory, Victoria Mansion, and the Longfellow House. Local celebrity, John McDonough dressed as Captain Lemuel Moody and greeted visitors to the Observatory.

The annual house tour on June 30th, **Munjoy Hill Architectural Classics**, called public attention to the architecture and history of the neighborhood that is

to serve on the **Governor's Council on Maine's Quality of Place**, a project that grew out of the 2006 Brookings Institution report, *Charting Maine's Future*, sponsored by GrowSmart Maine.

When the City of Portland announced a request for proposals (RFP) to redevelop the **Maine State Pier**, GPL immediately wanted to participate in the deliberations on the future of one of the most significant waterfront sites in the city. For years, GPL has been involved in discussions of Portland's waterfront including the City's Eastern Waterfront Master Plan and the Ocean Gateway Marine Terminal. In addition, GPL has often been asked to participate in discussions about new projects that involve historic properties or impact historic districts as they are being formulated, and welcomes such requests.

In December 2006, the Olympia Companies invited Executive Director Hilary Bassett to join a **focus group of 12 community leaders** to provide input as they pre-



attended the event, which included remarks by Mayor Nick Mavodones and other political leaders, tours of the Munjoy Hill neighborhood, and children's activities. Geo's Patisserie of Portland donated Observatory 200th birthday cake and Shipyard Brewing created and donated a special Cap'n Eli's 1807 Root Beer. Seven descendants of Captain Lemuel Moody were present for the celebrations, including John York, Jr. of South Portland and his sister Laura York Tricarico of Uganda. Bluegrass music and sunset tours rounded out an exciting day at the tower.

Earle Shettleworth, Director of the Maine Historic Preservation Commission presented "A City on the Move: Portland in 1807," an illustrated talk co-sponsored by GPL and the Maine Historical Society on June 7th. 150 people attended the lecture, which highlighted the vibrancy of Portland at the time the Observatory was built and Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was born.

In September 2007, the fall finale for the 200th Anniversary will be held on Saturday, Sept. 15 in conjunction with the annual Munjoy Hill neighborhood festival, known as Munjfest. The event will feature free guided tours of the Observatory and the neighborhood, a special 200th anniversary postage cancellation by the U.S. Postal Service, children's activities, music, and refreshments. Coffee By Design will provide a commemorative Captain Moody's Blend coffee celebrating the Observatory.

home to the Observatory. Houses open to the public included the Plummer House on the Eastern Promenade, an historic stable being converted to a studio, two condominiums which have taken different approaches to creatively update a 1912 apartment building, a mansard roofed cottage overlooking the city, a fully-restored late 18th century house updated in the Greek Revival era, and a stylistically Federal to Greek Revival transitional brick residence that survived the Great Fire of 1866, currently under restoration. In addition, tour participants could visit the Portland Observatory. In the afternoon, architect Craig Whitaker, of Mills Whitaker Architects of Cambridge, Massachusetts and Bridgton, Maine, provided a behind-the-scenes evaluation and overview of the former St. Lawrence Church sanctuary, designed by Arthur Bates Jennings in 1897. The sanctuary is slated to be carefully documented and then taken down due to structural flaws in the original construction. Tour sponsors included H. M. Payson, Meridian Mortgage, Dale Rand Printing, the Front Room restaurant, and an anonymous donor.

Advocating Historic Preservation and Good Design

GPL's advocacy focused on new architecture proposed for **Portland's eastern waterfront**, most notably the City's request for proposals for the **Maine State Pier**. In addition, Executive Director Hilary Bassett was invited

pared a response to the City's RFP. This was an exciting opportunity to review plans in progress, and to advocate for exciting new architecture, public access, pedestrian friendliness, quality materials, and compatibility with Portland's historic waterfront buildings. All of the focus group members agreed to keep the specifics of the plan confidential until all submitted proposals were officially opened on the due date February 22, 2007 – with no obligation to support the Olympia plan. GPL applauds the special effort Olympia made to incorporate community input and discuss their ideas prior to submitting their proposal.

Only two developer teams submitted proposals February 22, 2007: the Olympia Companies and Ocean Properties. These proposals were then submitted to the Portland City Council's Community Development Committee (CDC) for preliminary review and selection of a developer with which the council would begin negotiations. GPL advocated that the CDC conduct a process that was transparent and fair; focused on the Feb. 22 submissions, engaged the full Council, and based upon review criteria from the request for proposals.

GPL's board approved **14 guiding principles** to evaluate the two proposals (see box) in March 2007. After carefully reviewing both submissions against the principles and meeting with both developer teams, the **board endorsed the Olympia proposal**. The board

cited Olympia's overall vision for the pier as a highly accessible community resource, the quality of its design, its engagement of top local architectural and engineering talent, its commitment to a community process, and the thoroughness and quality of the proposal itself. As of August, 2007, the discussions of the Pier proposals had moved to the full city council, with a decision slated for early September.

In March 2007, Governor John Baldacci established the **Governor's Council on Maine's Quality of Place** to develop a recommended action plan for protecting, investing in and enhancing Maine's distinctive quality of place, including creative ways to finance such plans. As a member of the Council, **Hilary Bassett**, GPL's executive director, has participated in overall information gathering and group discussions, served as liaison to the historic preservation community, and helped develop action plans supporting historic preservation and downtown revitalization. Made up of business owners, real estate developers, environmental organizations, foundations, town managers, and a variety of interests from all over the state, the Council is working with the State Planning Office to produce its report to the Governor by the end of the year.

Closer to home, GPL worked with city staff and civic leaders to explore the potential of a **Congress Street district** from Bramhall Street to Franklin Arterial. However, the proposal was put on hold when a controversial council initiative to limit "formula busi-

Providing Access to Preservation Information and Resources

Joan Bennert, librarian for the **Peabody Research Library**, continued her leadership in improving collections storage, developing finding aids, updating procedures, and organizing GPL's early papers and archives. During 2006-07 GPL received generous donations, including 45 books, 12 photographs, 2 pamphlets, and 13 postcards. The quarterly **Landmarks Observer newspaper** continued to provide information about current advocacy, restoration techniques, historic preservation and architecture. Longtime editor **Virginia Wright** resigned after more than 10 years of service. New editor **Susan McLaughlin** began her service with the summer issue.

Landmarks sponsored the 12th annual **Old House Trade Show** March 17 and 18, 2007 at the Westbrook Campus of the University of New England. In spite of a major snow storm, 675 interested property owners attended the show, which featured 46 exhibitors. Exhibitors included unique window repair services, custom millwork, and plaster. Over 200 people attended eight workshops: lead based paint and asbestos, restoring older windows, preserving antique furniture, researching your old house, plumbing, carpentry, and electrical work, plaster, energy efficiency, and green approaches to renovation projects. Fifty-four people became new GPL members at the Show.

GPL's **Advisory Service** continued its efforts to provide field visits of historic properties, adding reports and photographs to the archives in the Peabody Library. A particularly interesting visit was a site visit to an historic property in the Bayside neighborhood, one of the few remaining early buildings on the original bluff at the end of Oxford Street.

Laying Groundwork for New Initiatives

To meet the increasing demand for GPL's services by community leaders, educators, members, and the public, and to significantly expand its financial foundation, the organization must move to a new level. GPL hired specialized consultants and implemented staff training to move forward in several areas: organizing work plans for more effective and efficient service, expanding fundraising and membership, and making progress toward strategic plan goals. In addition, we took preliminary steps to improve the web site, to make it more current, user friendly and easy to navigate.

With support from a grant from the **Davis Family Foundation**, GPL took steps to strengthen its membership recruitment, marketing, and fundraising efforts. Development Coordinator **Toby Crockett**, working with the Marketing and Membership Committee and Administrative Assistant **Lisa Flaim**, expanded our database and developed a series of targeted mailings to property owners in historic neighborhoods and to specific audiences, including real estate professionals. As a result, new member recruitment increased by 60 new members over the previous year, an increase of 60%. In addition, additional grant research and consultant advice on public relations and development laid the groundwork for more intensive fundraising efforts.

GPL continues to operate on a limited budget, and the board has made increased fundraising, expanded earned income, and other revenue development efforts a high priority. Assistant Director **Geoff Melhuish** joined the staff in December, with the express goal of developing a variety of earned income, field services, and consultation initiatives. Geoff brings extensive experience in researching historic properties, conducting architectural surveys, developing maintenance plans, and preparing historic structure reports. In addition, he knows GPL well, having served on the board for five years and as Board president.

On the financial front, the board hired an accounting firm to conduct an accounting review at the end of the fiscal year. That review is in process and the full financial reports will be available at the annual meeting in September 2007. Please call the office at 774-5561 if you would like a copy of the financial statements.

Creating a Dynamic Center for Architecture and Preservation

The board hired a consulting team and created a planning committee to prepare for an intensive fundraising effort for GPL, including a **Center for Architecture and Preservation**, organizational endowment, and other new initiatives. Extensive preliminary work has been completed to date. GPL's long-term goal is to create a Center for Architecture and Preservation where GPL can serve as a convener and resource center for Portland's growing historic preservation and architectural design community. The **New Headquarters committee** investigated several potential sites, and made a recommendation to the board. As of August, the final board approvals were in progress.

The Center for Architecture and Preservation will recognize the importance of Portland's vibrant design community and its long tradition of high quality architecture – one that cannot be taken for granted. As a result of GPL's four decades of research, education, advocacy and projects, Portland has been able to retain much of its distinctive architectural character. Projects such as the proposed redevelopment of the Maine State Pier remind us that the city is still evolving and that it is essential to advocate not only to preserve the best of the past but to encourage the finest quality architecture today and for the future. That is why GPL's work is so important. GPL looks forward to developing the Center and related programs and projects to ensure the historic distinction and continued relevance and vitality of greater Portland's architecture. ■

Criteria for Evaluating Proposals to Redevelop the Maine State Pier

1. Does the proposed plan create dynamic contemporary architecture?
2. Is the proposed architecture compatible with its historic surroundings but distinctly of our own time?
3. Are the proposed building designs appropriate to Portland, a small historic seaport with human-scale buildings and street patterns?
4. Does the proposal envision selecting the highest quality materials that will enhance the design and endure for years to come?
5. Does the proposed plan strive to create a unique sense of place that will delight visitors and feel comfortable to residents?
6. Does the plan propose flexible buildings and landscapes that can evolve over time, and can accommodate year-round uses?
7. Is the plan responsive to project phasing?
8. Does the proposed plan welcome extensive public access to the water, to the site and to the buildings, especially by pedestrians?
9. Does the proposed plan create a landscape component that will be as distinctive as the architecture?
10. Does the proposed plan establish clear relationships to walking paths, transportation, parking, and other infrastructure?
11. Does the proposed plan minimize parking facilities on the waterfront?
12. Does the proposed plan integrate Maine State Pier plans with the Eastern Waterfront Master Plan, and the waterfront as a whole?
13. Does the proposed plan embrace the use of environmentally-sustainable "green" design practices wherever possible?
14. Is there a clear commitment from the proposal sponsor to build what has been promised to the citizens of Portland, at the level of quality shown on the proposed project designs?



PHOTOS FROM LEFT TO RIGHT:

Lemuel Moody descendants at the Flag Day 200th anniversary celebration of the Portland Observatory. Starting from the upper left: Katie Tricarico, Al Tricarico, Joshua Tricarico, Maria Tricarico, Laura York Tricarico, James Tricarico, John York, and Emily Tricarico.

A guided tour of the Historic Eastern Cemetery.

Greater Portland Landmarks examines 213 Oxford Street.

View looking at the Ocean Gateway under construction with the Portland Observatory in the background.

nesses" was enacted. GPL looks forward to the eventual proposal to move forward with a district proposal because Congress Street's eclectic historic fabric lacks protection, with the exception of several designated landmarks such as the J. B. Brown Block (1883-84) and City Hall (1911).

Teaching Preservation, Architecture and History

Landmarks education and Observatory programs, reached a wide array of students, residents, and tourists. An enthusiastic group of 50 **volunteer docents** gave guided tours of the tower and Portland neighborhoods. The 12th class of **Portland's History Docents** (PHD) graduated, bringing new docents to GPL's volunteer force.

During the 2006-07 fiscal year, 8,172 visitors toured the **Portland Observatory**. Visitors came from 50 states and 35 countries. In the spring, 1,118 students climbed to the top of the **Observatory** as part of organized school tours. Many of those students also toured the **Eastern Cemetery (1668)**, where Observatory builder Lemuel Moody and the captains of the War of 1812 ships *Boxer* and *Enterprise* are buried.

In 2006-07, 734 people took part in **walking tours** of the Old Port, the Eastern Cemetery and the State Street area (Portland's Golden Age). In addition, 911 students participated in Congress Street and Old Port walking tours.

GPL Library Wish List

BOOKS:

- Brink, Brian Vanden, *At Home in Maine: House Designed to Fit the Land*. \$40.00.
- Elwell, Edward H., *Successful Business Houses of Portland, 1875*.
- Fishana, Charles, *The Walmart Effect*.
- Garvin, James L., *A Building History of Northern New England* \$26.00.
- Glenn, Patricia Brown, *Under Every Roof: A Kid's Style and Field Guide to Architecture of American Houses*. \$16.95.
- Joseph Jenkins, *The Slate Roof Bible*.
- Leeke, John C., *Practical Restoration Reports Compendium*. \$50.00.
- Mitchell, Stacy, *Big Box Swindle*.
- Nylander, Jane C., *Windows on the Past: Four Centuries of New England Life* \$58.50.
- Placzek, Adolph K., *MacMillan Encyclopedia of Architects*, 1982 (out-of-print, but they are available on-line).
- Wilson, Timothy, *Flags at Sea*, \$25.00.
- Books on gardening/landscaping in Maine or the Northeast.

Greater Portland Landmarks thanks donors and volunteers for your generous support!

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