



ORLEANS HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND MUSEUM

OrleansHistoricalSociety.org
3 River Road, P.O. Box 353, Orleans, MA 02653
508-240-1329

By bringing history and culture to life, the Orleans Historical Society will inspire a shared sense of community and pride in the rich heritage of the Town of Orleans.

AUTUMN 2017

OHS, LINNELL HOUSE OWNERS SIGN AGREEMENT FOR OCTOBER, 2020 SALE

The Orleans Historical Society (OHS) and owners of the Captain Linnell House, Bill and Shelly Conway, have signed an agreement to sell the 1850 property on Skaket Beach Road to OHS in October, 2020. Until then, the Conways will maintain full operation of the restaurant and special event facility. Afterwards, OHS will continue the Conway's 30-year tradition of hosting weddings and special civic and private events at the popular venue.

“It will be an incredible opportunity and honor to own the renowned Captain Linnell House on behalf of the community,” said OHS Board Chair Kathleen McNeil. “It will triple the display space for Orleans history and cultural exhibits, and expand archive, research and event space for public use. The large special event space is unmatched in the area and can provide sustainable rental income to offset OHS operating



Postcard of Captain Linnell House, c. 1950; large Function room has replaced the barn (front, right)

costs. The challenge now is to raise funds to purchase the Linnell property while making necessary improvements to our current 1834 Meetinghouse and 1939 Hurd Chapel so that they are more functional and accessible.” (cont. page 5)

ORLEANS VOTERS APPROVE \$150K GRANT

Orleans voters in October's Special Town Meeting overwhelmingly approved a \$150,000 Community Preservation Act grant to OHS for necessary improvements to its Meetinghouse and Hurd Chapel. Initial work will begin in January, 2018 and continue for several months, during which time the building will be closed.

The grant includes funds for a fire suppression (sprinkler) system to ensure the building and its contents are safe, structural interior and external repairs, and repairs to damage by animals to the

underground electrical and plumbing ductwork and insulation. Meanwhile, from its own budget OHS has paid for a new hot water heater, along with improved emergency lighting and additional weather-stripping around exit doors.

All of these improvements were identified and prioritized by historic preservation expert Fred Ecker (Spring 2017 OHS Newsletter). Funding for other improvements, including Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant entrances and restrooms, are part of a larger fundraising effort that OHS is considering.

Letter from the Executive Director

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Executive Director
Pamela Feltus

Autumn 2017

Much of this Newsletter is devoted to updates on the Captain Linnell House, so I thought I'd provide a little history about this famous sea captain, inventor and crazy driver. Born on Barley Neck Road in Orleans in 1811, Ebenezer (Eben) Harding Linnell grew up to be a renowned clipper-ship captain and inventor. A life-long Orleans resident, he was known locally for the unique architecture of his home, flamboyant taste in Oriental furnishings, and for driving his carriage around town at break-neck speeds.

Like his father Solomon Linnell (first keeper of the Orleans Life Saving Station), Eben was drawn to the sea. At age 25, he commanded a brig sailing regularly in the Cotton Trade from Boston to Savannah. Over the next decade, his routes expanded to include Havana, London, Manila and various other European ports.

Linnell soon added Calcutta and Canton as regular destinations and was very successful in the East India and China Trades. In 1855, he sailed the *Eagle Wing* from London to Hong Kong in 83-1/2 days, a record no other clipper-ship captain has ever beaten. Also he made a significant contribution to ship design when, in 1856-57, he invented and patented a top-sail rig that was used on 64 ships to increase their speed. The faster tea and other goods were delivered, the greater the profit.



Ebenezer Harding Linnell

In 1835 Linnell married Rebecca Crosby of Orleans and the couple had seven children, several of whom died in infancy. Linnell was killed at sea during a storm in 1864, and Rebecca died in 1895. Both are buried in Orleans Cemetery. A biographer later said of Linnell: "For native ability, energy, and shrewdness, few American shipmasters were his equal."

History is always interesting, but what lies ahead for the OHS Meetinghouse is even more so – and challenging. You read about the CPA grant (p.1) approved by voters for improvements to the building that will require us to **close over the winter**. We're going to have to move out most exhibits, archives and

artifacts, and store them elsewhere temporarily for safekeeping. And all that has to be done by January 15! Needless to say, we are scrambling to work out all the logistics and details. We will need help from volunteers to help pack, so please let me know if you can help.

One last note, the Meetinghouse Museum will be open right up to Christmas, so don't forget to stop by or shop on our website for those perfect gifts.

Sincerely,

Pamela Feltus

Exhibit Items Needed

An exhibit commemorating the 100th anniversary of the 1918 German submarine attack on Orleans is being planned for next summer at the Meetinghouse. If you have artifacts from the event that can be loaned to OHS for display, please contact Executive Director Pamela Feltus at 508-240-1329 or email [director@orleanshs.org].

THANK YOU!

Two Landmarks, One Vision

Orleans Historical Society to Preserve 1834 Meetinghouse, 1850 Captain Linnell House

It's a very unique opportunity! The Orleans Historical Society (OHS), on behalf of the community, has the chance in October, 2020 to purchase the Captain Linnell House while improving its current Meetinghouse and Hurd Chapel for better public access and use.



OHS Meetinghouse



Captain Linnell House

To make this possible, OHS envisions a fundraising effort for: 1) Improvements to the OHS Meetinghouse and Hurd Chapel; 2) The purchase of the Captain Linnell House, property, contents and established brand; and 3) A larger endowment for the long-term care of OHS buildings, collections, programs, and CG36500 lifeboat.

Meetinghouse and Hurd Chapel

Built in 1834 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the former Universalist Meetinghouse has been owned by OHS since 1971. It needs improvements (recommended by a preservation expert) such as a handicapped entrance and restroom, fire suppression and updated electrical, heating and alarm systems. With these updates, the Meetinghouse can continue for many

more years to serve its original purpose as a community gathering place. Plans also call for the adjacent 1939 Hurd Chapel, now used for storage, to be lifted onto a more permanent foundation with a basement. Up-to-date HV/AC, plumbing and electrical systems will be installed so that it can become a small but usable year-round space, with temperature-controlled storage underneath. The improvements will be completed over the next few years.

Yet these projects will not resolve a serious lack of space. Currently, less than one-third of the Orleans artifacts and archives at OHS can be displayed and preserved in the Meetinghouse. Exhibits cannot be expanded because the main floor area must be kept open for concerts, programs and community events. The balcony is crammed with collection items and supplies, and workspaces for staff and volunteers. There is no room for growth.

History of Linnell House

1835: Ebenezer Linnell marries Rebecca Crosby, builds Cape-style cottage
1850: Current house built (next to original cottage)
1864: Linnell dies at sea; Rebecca and daughters remain in house
c1910: Family sells house that falls into disrepair
1988: Conways purchase home; restoration begins
1990: House listed on MA Register of Historic Places
1995: Function room built on footprint of former barn

The Captain Linnell House

Owners of the 1850 Captain Linnell House (listed on the Massachusetts Register of Historic Places) approached OHS to say they were planning their retirement and urged OHS to consider buying the property in 3-4 years as a possible solution to its space problem. After careful analysis, OHS concluded that this was (continued on page 4)

ORLEANS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

TWO LANDMARKS, ONE VISION (continued from page 3)

a unique preservation opportunity with tremendous potential for Orleans.

The restaurant's dining areas and lobby, with their mid-19th century décor, would easily provide much additional museum and preservation space for current and future collections. Also, the nearly 1,600-square-foot Function room (and two licensed kitchens) is unmatched in the area and could provide sustainable

rental income to offset operating costs. For decades it has been a popular venue for weddings, corporate events and community meetings.



Cluttered archive storage in Meetinghouse balcony.

This one vision to preserve two extraordinary

landmarks in Orleans will significantly expand available museum space and provide multiple “go-to” cultural centers for community activities and private events. It is a win-win for Orleans, its residents and visitors, and for OHS.



Linnell House Function Room can seat up to 200 people.

More Information: Call OHS at 508-240-1329
or go to www.OrleansHistoricalSociety.org

SO WHY LINNELL?

by Kathleen McNeil, Chair
Orleans Historical Society

We are delighted that Orleans voters at the October Special Town Meeting unanimously approved a \$150,000 Community Preservation Act grant that we had requested to fund improvements to the 1834 Meetinghouse, including a fire suppression (sprinkler) system. This landmark building, listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1999, has been the Society's headquarters and museum for more than 45 years.

So why do we need the Captain Linnell House? In short, without it there is no space in the Meetinghouse to grow and meet our ongoing commitment to preserve and display items important to the Town's rich heritage. Linnell is an immediate opportunity that would complement the Meetinghouse. Essentially, it is turn-key as a museum and community center facility, with a viable revenue source – rental of the existing Function room and two state-licensed kitchens.

In the past we have looked at other growth options, but all had their own logistical and financial challenges. None had as good a potential for self-sustainability as Linnell. Also, we believe there are many ways Orleans residents, businesses and visitors will benefit from the purchase:

- 1) It supports the town's goal of preserving and protecting its historic buildings;
- 2) It broadens access to Linnell by making it a public museum and cultural center;
- 3) It triples available exhibition space for Orleans artifacts, and doubles visitor capacity;
- 4) It makes the 2.28-acre Linnell property available for outdoor events and future displays, and
- 5) It is likely to attract more visitors to Orleans.

We hope you share our excitement and enthusiasm in this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to preserve two prominent landmarks. Together, they will showcase Orleans history for generations to come, and provide multiple “go-to” cultural centers for community activities and private events. Feel free to contact us with questions or comments at OrleansHistoricalSociety.org.

AGREEMENT SIGNED

(continued from p. 1)

The sale includes the French neo-classical Linnell home (listed on the Massachusetts Register of Historic Places), the 2.28-acre grounds and gardens, all business-related items and equipment, the Captain Linnell House brand, and the furniture and fine art in the building. A purchase price was not disclosed.

“We are very pleased to have reached this agreement with OHS because we know they will be good caretakers of the Captain Linnell House and will preserve it for many years to come,” Bill Conway said. “Ebenezer Harding Linnell, the clipper-ship captain who built this house for his wife, was a founder of the Orleans Universalist Church whose Meetinghouse OHS has owned and occupied for decades. It is truly fitting that these two landmarks be preserved together for the enjoyment of Orleans residents and visitors.”

Check the Events Calendar on our website for details and other events!

Upcoming Events: Autumn 2017

Music at the Museum

Friday Nov 17 at 7:30 p.m.
Masterpieces for Cello and Piano

Cellist Bo Ericsson and pianist Anne Franciose Perrault offer music from the Baroque, Classical and Romantic periods including Couperin’s delightful *Pieces en Concert*, Beethoven’s *Sonata No. 4 in C major* and Chopin’s *Sonata in G minor, op. 65*.



Other Meetinghouse Events

Through December 12:

Stop by the Meetinghouse to see our exhibit “150 Years of Baseball in Orleans.” Learn about the town’s various baseball teams that led to the eventual founding of the Orleans *Cardinals* – now *Firebirds*.

Through December 24:

Visit the Museum Shop for the perfect holiday gifts, including the second in a series of special ornaments designed uniquely for OHS. The 2017 ornament commemorates the history of baseball in Orleans. Gifts also are available online at OrleansHistoricalSociety.org

January through April 15, 2018:

Meetinghouse and Museum **CLOSED** for construction (Executive Director Pamela Feltus can be reached at 508-240-1329 or by email at director@orleanshs.org).



Orleans PlayBall ornament

IT’S NOT TOO LATE TO JOIN OR DONATE!

Renew memberships, donate online by credit card at www.OrleansHistoricalSociety.org

Here is my 2018 Membership: ____ (Individual \$25) ____ (Family \$40)

Here is my gift* of: ___\$500 ___\$250 ___\$100 ___\$50 ___\$25 \$ ___Other

Name _____

Street, City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ E-Mail (We won’t share/sell it) _____

Please mail form to: Orleans Historical Society, P.O. Box 353, Orleans, MA 02653

**Does your employer match your donations to non-profit organizations? You can double your impact by using your employer’s donation matching program.*



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Halloween Spookfest

A great time was had by all on Halloween when the OHS Meetinghouse became the “Creepy Cabaret” for a night of food, music and fun!

