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Chesterfield Historical Society Newsletter

Number 43

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Help Us Save the Stone House!

We want our members and friends to know that the Chesterfield Historical Society (CHS) is in the process of purchasing the Stone House Tavern at the corner of Routes 9 and 63. We are excited about the opportunity to preserve this historic Chesterfield building, as well as expand the Historical Society's service to the community. The Zoning Board has recently given us permission to designate the Stone House Tavern as a museum. We are also in the process of having the building listed on the state and national registers of historic places. Before his death in February, the current owner of the Stone House, Constantine "Deeko" Broutsas, expressed his desire to see the building purchased by CHS. Since the Stone House is held in a trust, we will move forward with the purchase as planned.

Here are some facts about the historic significance of the Stone House Tavern.

The original home, now the el, was built in 1790 by John Pierce on a parcel of land he purchased from Samuel Converse, part of which extended into Spofford Lake. John's son, Ezekiel, inherited the property and in 1831 built the 2 ½-story addition from locally quarried granite. The addition is a Federal Style structure. The east and west elevations feature a pedimented gable, with a Palladian-style (only decorative) window. There are stone quoins at each corner of the house. The south elevation has nine windows and a central door. The door is flanked by side-lights and has a fanlight. The interior molding and fireplace trim in all of the rooms is Greek Revival.

The Stone House interior is symmetrical in design having on the first floor four rooms of equal proportions leading off a central hall. The rooms to the right are separated by a

pocket door, permitting their use as a large parlor. The front room to the left contains a wooden cage-like bar. The top of the cage could be raised or lowered to permit the serving of liquor. The central hall opens to the el. Several steps down lead to a large room with an open-hearth fireplace and brick oven, which was the original kitchen. The remainder of the el, with a 1930's addition of dormers, has been converted to two apartments.

The second floor of the Stone House Tavern has a ballroom on the south side with a vaulted ceiling. Two chambers are off the hall to the north. The ballroom features built-in side benches and a rare fiddler stand. On the third floor there are five 5' x 8' sleeping chambers with built in platforms. Each has small windows to allow ventilation from the east and west outside windows. These were probably used by stagecoach drivers and drovers. The Stone House has been a residence, tavern, stagecoach stop, and was rumored to have been a stopover for the Underground Railway. The ballroom was a popular place for dances and balls during the home's earlier years. It was run as an inn and teahouse from the 1920's to the 1950's. In recent years, it has been used as a shop that sold antiques, and a fine arts and rare books gallery.

Augusta Pierce was the last member of the Pierce family to own the Tavern. She was one of the first women to speak out at town meetings. There is a humorous story about what happened at one town meeting. While "Gusty" was speaking, her petticoat fell down. She nonchalantly picked it up, flung it over her arm and continued making her point. The irrepressible Gusty died in 1917.

Once In A Lifetime Opportunity

If you would like to assist in our purchase of the Stone House Tavern, please send your donations to the Chesterfield Historical Society, P.O. Box 204, Chesterfield, NH 03443, noting that this donation is for the purchase of the Stone House Tavern. We would appreciate receiving donations by March 31st of this year, if at all possible, as the date of the scheduled sale is April 30th. We will continue to raise funds to be placed in an endowment fund. Thank you for considering this request. We appreciate your interest in the Historical Society and look forward to seeing all of our friends when we hold an open house at the Stone House Tavern.

To assist in the purchase of the Stone House Tavern, fill out the attached donation form and mail your **donations** to:

Chesterfield Historical Society
P.O. Box 204
Chesterfield, NH 03434

Send by March 31st if possible