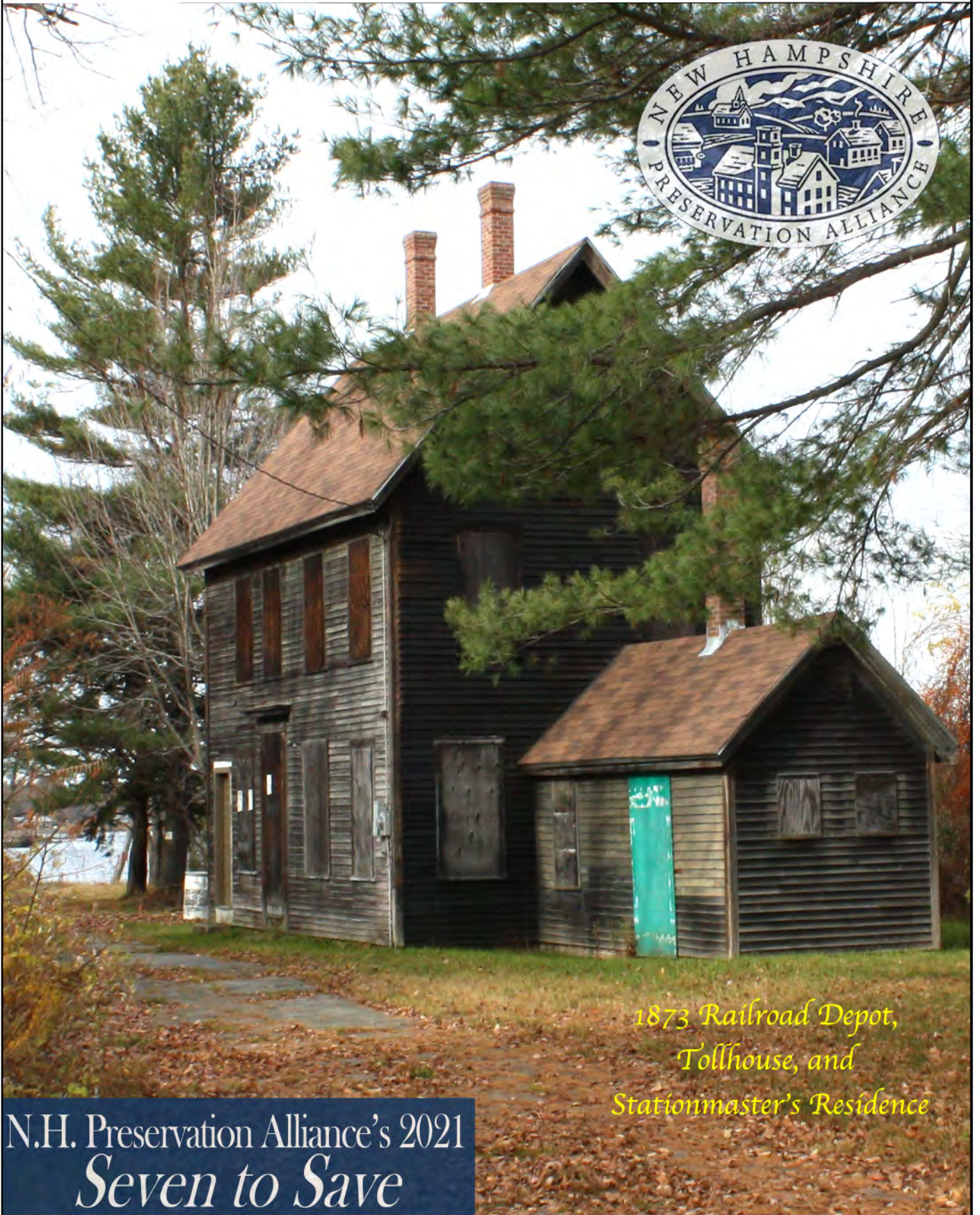


The Newington Neighbor

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*1873 Railroad Depot,
Tollhouse, and
Stationmaster's Residence*

N.H. Preservation Alliance's 2021
Seven to Save

Fritz Wetherbee: Railroad Bridge at Bloody Point

<https://www.wmur.com/article/fritz-wetherbee-railroad-bridge-at-bloody-point/38209915>



On November 9, 2021 Fritz Wetherbee of WMUR's Chronicle did a short segment on the Bloody Point railroad depot. The link to the video is above. The text of his segment is below:

"Guy who used to live in this house died in 1971. Jeez, I was 35 years old in 1971.

The guy's name was Elmer Brooks. For many years he had been the station keeper on a railroad line that used to run right by this building and right where I'm standing.

This building was not only Mr. Brooks home, but it was a depot on the old Portsmouth-Dover Railroad.

Upstairs Mr. Brooks had a house. Part of the downstairs was the ticket office. In 1915 they put a waiting room wing on.

Outside the building parallel to the tracks was a platform.

Now, this train station is located in the part of Newington called Bloody Point. That's what this is. In the 1600s Captain Walter Neil of Strawberry Banke and Dover's head man, a guy named Thomas Wiggin, both claimed this point belonged to them, and they threatened each other with guns.

They were going to have a duel. The duel was never held. The public got a big laugh over that fact, but since that

time, this proposed dueling ground has been called the Bloody Point.

The point juts out toward Dover Point. Making it the shortest distance between the two points.

1874 they built a railroad bridge between that short area. Part of the span was a covered bridge. The rest were wooden pilings, driven into the riverbed, and there was a section of the bridge that swung open like a door, which allowed boats to pass through.

But the bridge was built in such a way that horses pulling wagons could also pass over the river by the tracks, as well as pedestrians walk across, of course for a

fee, it was a toll bridge as well as a railroad trestle. And for 50 years, the tickets to use the bridge were sold here as well in this depot cum residential house.

1934, we constructed the General Sullivan Bridge and tore out the old railroad bridge. Sullivan Bridge itself was replaced 1984 by the Little Bay Bridges. The State of New Hampshire then took over the depot, but it allowed Elmer Brooks to rent it back from the state and this, he did until his death, as I say in 1971.

As for the depot, you can see it's still here and people are working to stabilize it and preserve it. And I say, "God Bless Them."



Save the Depot

Lulu Pickering

The Newington Historic District Commission (HDC) has been a consulting party to the General Sullivan Bridge (GSB) Section 106 process since September 2018. Over the last three years, the HDC has been successful in helping to mitigate the loss of this historic bridge with the recent provision to preserve the 1873 Railroad Depot on Bloody Point.

The key to our argument has long been that the Bloody Point area is one of the oldest, most historic spots (early 1630s) in the whole state of New Hampshire and has long been part of the transportation system (ferries, railroads, bridges, turnpikes), which led to the economic development of New Hampshire over the last four centuries.

This effort has involved numerous trips to Concord and Zoom meetings with NH Dept. of Transportation (DOT), NH Div. of Historical Resources (DHR), Federal Highway Administration (FHA), and other consulting parties. The HDC has been unanimous in its support of saving the depot property. Many thanks to Jo Haskell, John Lamson, Peggy Lamson, Katie Moody, Lulu Pickering, Kristen Poulin, Becky St. Germaine, and Alan Wilson.

Success has come with the decision by DOT, DHR, and FHA that the Railroad Depot property could be transferred to Newington for no cost, plus \$150,000 from DOT towards rehabilitating the

outside of the depot building, a detailed building assessment report, and a current land map. The executed memorandum of agreement among these parties was distributed on November 11, 2021.

The ability to save the depot and return parts of Bloody Point to Newington came at a rare moment in time when a federal Section 106 process was activated – a process that requires mitigation for adverse effects to historic structures. Without the planned destruction of the GSB, preserving the depot would never have been on the table.

At first the selectmen were supportive of this effort. They sent a letter to the state requesting \$1 million to rehabilitate the depot (declined). They asked that the Bloody Point property be transferred to the town after the State rehabilitated the depot (declined). Then in June they asked that the State sell the depot property and give the money to the town (declined).

The best analogy I can think of to explain these negative decisions by the state is this: Say that you have an uncle who is making out his will and is deciding who will inherit his property. The catch is that Uncle Joe has a beloved pet that he wants someone to love and care for after he is gone. The relative who says, “Uncle Joe, I don’t want to put any effort into your property and will likely sell it, and I don’t want to take care of your pet but give me the money from the sale of your estate” is NOT going to inherit.

The only reason the depot property is in play at all is because of required historic mitigation for the loss of an historic bridge that involves saving another historic structure. You have to care about preserving history and historic structures.

During the Section 106 process, the HDC developed a 16-page “Bloody Point Park” document (April 2021) that outlined what would be necessary to preserve the railroad building and to create a public park on the property surrounding the old depot and former railroad bridge abutment.

The June letter the selectmen sent to NH DOT that requested that the State sell the depot property and give the money to the town would have closed the door on Newington’s ability to own the property.

So the HDC tried a last “Hail Mary” pass. If the selectmen did not want to burden Newington taxpayers with another historic building, would the Section 106 process allow the Newington Historical Society to represent Newington instead, with the full intention of preserving the depot and maintaining public access to this spot on the Piscataqua River.

Luckily, the answer was yes with one caveat – the Historical Society will have to find a different public entity willing to work with them on the transfer of the property if the selectmen will not. The actual transfer will not be made for 18 to 24 months so there is time to see what is possible.

Bloody Point Park – April 19, 2021



Create a public park with a rehabilitated Railroad Depot/Tolltaker residence. The State rented the building for residential use until about 1972.



Land and Features



Save the Depot

Lulu Pickering

Newington Historical Society (NHS)

At its annual meeting in May, the board of the NHS voted to pursue ownership of the railroad depot property if the selectmen were not interested.

The Historical Society already manages the Old Parsonage museum and the Schoolhouse Museum in the Old Town Hall, both buildings owned by the Town of Newington. Taking ownership of a property is a big step for the Historical Society.

The current concept is:

- to create a railroad museum on the first floor of the depot.
- to add public bathrooms and a small kitchen area on the first floor so the property can generate income as a public venue for weddings or graduations.
- to create a rental unit in the old stationmaster's quarters on the second floor and attic to generate income for future building and property maintenance needs.
- to remove dead trees, invasive species, vines, thorn bushes, etc. and create nature trails for the public around Bloody Point.
- to preserve public access to the Piscataqua River at this location.

In other words, the goal is to rehabilitate the building and land and make it pay for

itself over time. Of course, other uses of the building are possible, but right now the current idea is to revive the railroad depot - living quarters that existed at this location from 1873 until it was mothballed in the early 1970s after the last renter Elmer Brooks died.

The first step in this effort was accomplished by Helen Frink when she nominated the depot to the NH Preservation Alliance's Seven to Save program.

On October 26, 2021 Newington's depot was selected as one of NH's seven most vulnerable historic properties that should be preserved. Other people, not just us, could see the value in preserving this building and location!!

On November 9th, WMUR's Chronicle picked up the story about saving the depot and Fritz Wetherbee did a segment beside the depot with its views of the surrounding river and bridges. He noted, "As for the depot, you can see it's still here and people are working to stabilize it and preserve it. And I say, 'God Bless Them.'"

It lifted all our hearts to hear him supporting our efforts to save this historic Newington resource. Yes, we have a long, long way to go to make this effort a reality. There are no guarantees but I hope we can do it.

Our next step is to create a "Save the Depot" group to lend their name, expertise, ideas, sweat equity, and hopefully some money towards rehabilitation of the depot property. We also need to seek additional funding through LCHIP and other federal/state grants. It will be a long process that will be accomplished one step at a time.

On a personal note, it took 12 long years for Will and I to renovate our old barn (1788-now). A project too scary to even begin but each small step brought us closer to getting it done. From sleepless nights, "What are we ever going to do about the barn?" to a beautiful red barn, fully restored this fall. Not many people would spend the time and money to renovate a big old building like a barn but it is undeniable that the end result adds beauty and character to the whole town. Heritage is important for us all.

We have miles to go before we sleep on the Bloody Point depot project but preserving this small piece of Historic Newington for future generations to enjoy is a unique opportunity for everyone.

If you want to help us save the depot, please let us know. We will be sending out a flyer soon. We are open to all ideas and can use all the help we can get!

Newington-Dover Railroad Bridge



The covered bridge section of the old railroad bridge is shown in both of these old photos.

Imagine sitting on the hard metal seat behind these young oxen as you made your way across the river on the vehicle and pedestrian side of the bridge.

The railroad tracks had their own side of the bridge on the Eliot, Maine side of the crossing.