

First Parish Meetinghouse Restoration Newsletter – Winter Edition

The Campaign for the Restoration of First Parish Meetinghouse, Plymouth, Massachusetts

March 2015

First Parish Meetinghouse Achieves Listing on the National Register of Historic Places!

The Restoration Committee is pleased to announce that as of December, 2014, First Parish Meetinghouse has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Department of the Interior.

Achieving placement on the Register is a lengthy and involved process. The Department of the Interior sets the following criteria for evaluation and listing:

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons in our past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;
- D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.

Ordinarily properties used for religious purposes are not considered eligible for the National Register unless they fall in the following category: *A religious property deriving primary significance from architectural or artistic distinction or historical importance.*

First Parish met that category and also qualified based on criteria A and C, above.

Listing in the National Register of Historic Places provides formal recognition of a property's historical, architectural, or archeological significance based on national standards used by every state. Results include:

– Becoming part of the national Register Archives, a public, searchable database that provides a wealth of research information.

- Encouraging preservation of historic resources by documenting a property's historic significance.
- Providing opportunities for specific preservation incentives, such as federal and state preservation grants, when funds are available, for planning and rehabilitation.

Finally, National Register listing places no obligations on private property owners and does not require public access.

Most Endangered Historic Resource

First Parish Church in Plymouth (MA), also known as the National Memorial Pilgrim Church, has been singled out as a Massachusetts Most Endangered Historic Resource by the not-for-profit organization, Preservation Massachusetts. The designation was awarded at a presentation in Worcester, MA on October 30, 2014.

As the birthplace of religious freedom in this country, this Meetinghouse is fifth in the line of structures where the English Pilgrim immigrants, and many of their American ancestors, have worshipped since their arrival in 1620.



What exactly is a Historic Resource? It is defined as a district, site, building, structure or object of historical, architectural, archaeological, engineering or cultural significance.

Why is this award so significant? Well, it is not about money. Money is not awarded. What is awarded, by a credible independent agency, is just as significant. It is the recognition of the value our historic place possesses within Plymouth, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and indeed, within the nation.

Continued...

Donations Made in Memory of:

Alice Hedge
Bunny Dana
Betsey Oheme
Lois B. Roberts
Ellis & Ellen Brewster
Cricket Withington
Richard Withington
Rev. Dr. Robert Miller
Drusilla G. Withington
Rev. Horace Bachelder
Christopher T. Knudsen
Edward Doty & descendants to the Fay family

Donations Made in Honor of:

Ben & Anne Brewster
General Society of Mayflower Descendants

During the period of July 2014 – February 2015

The Best Things in Life are Free

This is the first line, lyric of the Beatles' 1963 hit release: "Money (that's what I want)." Do you remember the next line? It is, "but you can keep them for the birds and bees." Really? Money exceeds the value of nature, and, by implication, everything else in our world? Unfortunately, this is true for too many people.

Yet, here is another and often competing basic value: generosity. Religious sages and other very thoughtful people declare that giving is superior to receiving. This is simply so because giving is deeply satisfying.

Will you please consider a donation---no matter how large or small the amount--- to the restoration of the National Memorial Pilgrim Church? When you do, you'll defy The Rolling Stones who "can't get no satisfaction."

www.restorefirstparishplymouth.org

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When is a Tiffany Window not a Tiffany Window?

The answer is... it's no longer a Tiffany window when you learn that it was fabricated by Church Glass and Decorating Company of New York!

Your Restoration Committee learned this just a few weeks ago when we received a copy of an email that was sent to Roberto Rosa at Serpentino Glass Studio from Amber Wingerson, a doctoral student who is writing her thesis on The Church Glass and Decorating Company. Amber furnished us with a copy of a Church Glass and Decorating Company brochure displaying a picture of the Robinson window. She also promises to share her thesis with us when it is completed.

So, is the "loss" of the Tiffany name important? To some, I imagine. Tiffany is sexy. Church Glass and Decorating Company is not. However, no matter how one looks at it, we now know for certain where the window came from, and that is a good thing.

And, attribution aside, this is a fabulous window! Where it came from, which studio fabricated it, does not affect its quality. According to Roberto Rosa, who has repaired many Tiffany windows in his 26 years working with stained glass, "*...the methods of fabrication, glass selection, acid etching, and all other techniques used in the Robinson Window are used in windows designed and fabricated by Tiffany. So even with my hands-on experience working on numerous Tiffany windows, I was fooled.*" Roberto goes on to say that in his opinion "*as a craftsman, it (the Robinson Window) still shows amazing artistry and impeccable craftsmanship. The use of Opalescent glass in stained glass windows, started by John La Farge, and popularized by Tiffany's thousands of windows and lamps, is truly an American invention of the Arts and Craft Movement.*"

First Parish Meetinghouse was built as a monument to the Pilgrims. The Robinson window depicts a historic moment in a pilgrimage that began in Holland and ended in Plymouth. The story lives, and the Robinson window helps to keep it alive.

Won't you help us bring the Robinson window back to First Parish? Your donation will make a difference, and will help to keep the story alive!