

Press Release - Concord Journal, 10/25/12 issue

Barrett Farm Transfer Celebration

This Saturday, October 27th, Save Our Heritage and Minute Man National Historical Park are holding an event to celebrate the completion of the Save Our Heritage restoration of Barrett Farm, and the transfer of its ownership to the National Park Service, Minute Man National Historical Park. A public ceremony with Congresswoman Niki Tsongas and others will take place at Barrett Farm, 448 Barretts Mill Road, at 11:00 a.m., followed by an Open House from noon to 4:00 p.m. to which Concord residents and visitors are invited.

Restoration of the historic Barrett House, built in 1705, began eight years ago when Save Our Heritage (SOH), a Concord-based nonprofit preservation organization, acquired Barrett Farm and the 3.4 acres of surrounding land from the McGrath family. "It was a collaborative effort right from the start between Save Our Heritage, the Town, the Park, and the McGraths," explained Neil Rasmussen, president of SOH. "Our shared goal was to have Save Our Heritage restore the Col. James Barrett House to the way it was during Revolutionary times, and to eventually incorporate it into Minute Man Park so that visitors could experience it as living history. And that time has finally come."

The Colonel James Barrett Farm is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as one of the most important Revolutionary War landmarks of national significance. Colonel James Barrett, a member of the Provincial Congress, was the senior officer and overall field commander at the North Bridge in the first battle of the American Revolution. He was also in charge of all the supplies in the area, enough for an army of 15,000. When the British Regulars marched to Concord on April 19, 1775, they were intent on seizing weapons and other military supplies stored throughout the town, including a major stockpile on Colonel Barrett's property. The farm and the Barrett family provide a central link to the story of "the shot heard 'round the world."

The Barrett property has been farmed continuously from Colonial times to the present, and has been owned by only two families over the past 300 years -- the Barretts for 200 of those years, and the McGraths for 100. Michael McGrath now resides in a house behind the Col. James Barrett house, and his late brother Patrick farmed the surrounding land and ran the McGrath Farm stand across the road.

Since 2004, the exterior restoration of Barrett House has seen the stabilization of the back wall; completion of a new wood roof; application of hand-skived pine clapboards; and the installation of handmade replications of the original 1770's doors and faithful reproductions of the original window frames and sash. In addition, archaeological studies were conducted, and the land behind the house was cleared to reveal a more open agrarian landscape. Painstaking restoration and preservation of the interior of the house has included stabilizing of original plaster walls; repointing of fireboxes; and the restoration

of wood paneling and floors. In addition, careful paint conservation techniques have revealed many original and exceedingly rare colonial paint surfaces.

“Much of our restoration work employed methods and materials used in the 18th century, wherever possible,” comments Jim Cunningham, SOH Barrett Farm Project Manager. The wood used to stabilize the post and beam structure was hand-hewn by traditional timber framers, and wrought iron reproduction hardware was fashioned by Concord’s local blacksmith, Carl Close. As a result of this meticulous attention to details, when visitors enter the house, they are transported to Revolutionary times and can sense a direct, living, tangible link to the beginning of our nation.

This eight-year restoration project was generously funded by four CPA grants from the Town of Concord, a Save America’s Treasures grant from the Department of the Interior, and numerous private donations. Many town departments and committees have provided critical assistance and dozens of volunteers and organizations, including the Boy Scouts, have donated their time and effort to the project.

“Restoring Barrett Farm was only one part of the preservation effort. Getting it incorporated into Minute Man National Historical Park was the other part, and this involved a three-part process at the federal level spanning several years,” stated Anna West Winter, executive director of SOH. “In 2005, the late Senator Edward Kennedy and former Representative Marty Meehan lent their energetic support to sponsoring legislation to facilitate a feasibility study of the farm’s inclusion in the Park. Later,” Winter adds, “in 2009, thanks to the steadfast leadership of Congresswoman Niki Tsongas, Minute Man Park’s boundaries were expanded by Congressional legislation to include the Col. James Barrett House and additional surrounding acres.” Finally, this year Congress appropriated the funds needed for the National Park Service to acquire Barrett House and the surrounding land.

“We’re delighted to finally have the Col. James Barrett House incorporated into Minute Man National Historical Park,” stated the Park’s Superintendent, Nancy Nelson. “It’s something we have been looking forward to for a long time. Barrett Farm completes the narrative of the beginning of the American Revolution within the Park.”

The Barrett Farm celebration on October 27 starts at 11:00 a.m. will be held outside on the lawn, rain or shine at 448 Barretts Mill Road.