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Images available upon request.

Preservation Interns uncover the hidden history of Pittsfield Neighborhoods

Pittsfield, MA – Students in the Master of Science in Design and Historic Preservation program at Hancock Shaker Village and UMASS Amherst are tracking down the provenance of residential properties within the city limits of Pittsfield. Preservation students Matt Alexander and Sean McWilliams were recently engaged as interns to complete 20 historic building surveys with a focus on single and multi-family homes 75 years or older. This survey work took them to Adam, Circular, Daniels, Linden, Lincoln, Madison and Robbins streets in Pittsfield, MA.

Alexander and McWilliams worked under the guidance of Lisa Sauer, a recent graduate of the HSV/UMASS Historic Preservation program and a specialist in building surveys. Ms. Sauer oriented Alexander and McWilliams to essential survey tools and helped them work through a list of priority structures, supplied by the City Historic Commission and Department of Community and Economic Development. “This was a wonderful experience,” said Sauer. “This type of work is very much akin to genealogy research. We worked closely with the staff and primary sources at the Registry of Deeds and the Local History Room at the Athenaeum.”

The assignment taught them how to document and analyze buildings without gaining interior access, and author detailed surveys that are of value to the community. They found that many buildings had

fascinating stories to tell. For example, a multi-family residence at 17 Adam Street dates from 1865, and is one of three homes built side-by-side by the Munyan brothers, who constructed Pittsfield's City Hall in the Civil War era.

The interns mined a wealth of primary resource materials held in the Berkshire Athenaeum's Local History Collection and the Registry of Deeds. They visited their assigned buildings, documenting them according to Massachusetts Historic Commission guidelines to complete a multi-page inventory form for each structure, supplying details such as photographs, locus maps, construction date, architect or builder, construction materials and condition, as well as history of ownership.

Alexander and McWilliams have been pursuing their master's degrees through a collaborative program of Hancock Shaker Village and University of Massachusetts Amherst, which allows students to remain in their current employment while attending classes on Fridays and Saturdays at both the Amherst and HSV campuses. Alexander has just completed his degree and McWilliams is entering his second year. These internships further the students' opportunities to work in the field, an important component of the graduate program's coursework. "We here at UMASS Amherst and at Hancock Shaker Village have always seen our program as being a unique blend of hands-on field work and classroom theory and research," said professor Max Page, Director of Historic Preservation Initiatives at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Field work and their internships have proven essential to their learning, augmenting lectures by professors, classroom discussion, and reading books. As interns, Alexander and McWilliams were awarded a donor-funded stipend.

ABOUT HANCOCK SHAKER VILLAGE

An outdoor history museum and educational resource situated on 750 acres of farm, field, and woodland in Pittsfield, Mass., Hancock Shaker Village affords visitors authentic experiences through their 20 historic buildings, heirloom medicinal and vegetable gardens, and over 22,000 Shaker artifacts. This National Historic Landmark depicts daily life at the Shakers' City of Peace through its 220 years. Guided tours, craft and cooking demonstrations, lectures, workshops, interpreted hiking trails, and a Discovery Room with hand-on activities for children all help to bring the Shaker story to life. The Village Harvest Café offers light lunch fare. An interactive

Village audio tour is available in English, French, Italian, and German. Additionally, HSV offers an executive every-other weekend Master of Science in Design & Historic Preservation program in collaboration with UMASS Amherst; see www.umass.edu/preservation for more information about degree and elective coursework and opportunities.

HOURS, ADMISSION, AND DIRECTIONS

Hancock Shaker Village is open daily for self-guided visits from April 13 through October 27. Currently, the Village is open 10:00am to 5:00pm daily.

Hancock Shaker Village members are admitted free of charge. Children 12 and under are admitted free of charge courtesy of Berkshire Bank. Admission for adults is \$18, and youth visitors aged 13 to 17 are \$8.

Hancock Shaker Village is located on Route 20 in Pittsfield, Mass., just west of the junction of Routes 20 and 41. For GPS purposes, the Village is located at 34 Lebanon Mountain Rd., Hancock, Mass. 01237. Or, enter 1843 W. Housatonic St., Pittsfield, Mass. 01201 then proceed 1/2 mile further west on Rt. 20 to the parking lot.

ABOUT UMASS AMHERST

UMass Amherst, the flagship campus of the University of Massachusetts system, sits on nearly 1,450-acres in the scenic Pioneer Valley of Western Massachusetts, 90 miles from Boston and 175 miles from New York City. The campus provides a rich cultural environment in a rural setting close to major urban centers. The campus is home to nearly 23,000 Undergraduate students, 7,000 Graduate students, and 1,200 full-time faculty.

UMass Amherst was born in 1863 as a land-grant agricultural college set on 310 rural acres with four faculty members, four wooden buildings, 56 students and a curriculum combining modern farming, science, technical courses, and liberal arts.

Over time, the curriculum, facilities, and student body outgrew the institution's original mission. In 1892 the first female student enrolled and graduate degrees were authorized. By 1931, to

reflect a broader curriculum, “Mass Aggie” had become Massachusetts State College. In 1947, “Mass State” became the University of Massachusetts at Amherst.

The campus grew rapidly in the 60’s and 70’s and emerged into the 21st century as a major research institution and as the flagship campus of the state’s five-campus University system, and enrollment of nearly 24,000 students and a national and international reputation for excellence.

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