

Heritage Alliance of Pawtucket 2023 Preservation Reward Program

We are delighted to announce that this year's Preservation Reward Program will give a monetary reward to two preservation projects.

roof replacement on the Joseph Spaulding House at 30 Fruit Street

The Joseph Spaulding House at 30 Fruit Street was built in 1828 and is one of Pawtucket's oldest homes. Spaulding was a cabinet maker from Plainfield, CT who came to Pawtucket to apprentice with Amos Read (1st cousin of John Blake Read, who built the nearby Read-Ott House on Walcott Street). Joseph Spaulding's house still contains elements that show his expert skill as a carpenter.

The house was purchased in 1850 by another carpenter, Elias Tingley, who added the kitchen ell. In 1918 Frederic and Hazel Ratcliffe bought the home from the Tingley family. Their only grandchild Betty came to live with them in 1926 when she was two years old. After Hazel Ratcliffe died in 1971, Betty and her husband John Johnson began restoring the house. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

In 2002 Betty Johnson created the Pawtucket History Research Center (PHRC), which was based in her home. Her extensive historical research collection is now in the Pawtucket Public Library, and the house is still a private residence, whose owners are dedicated to its care and preservation.

In 1828 Pawtucket was experiencing a boom in industry and manufacturing, which attracted many skilled craftsmen such as Joseph Spaulding and Elias Tingley. Through the efforts and care of its owners, the Joseph Spaulding House is a near-pristine example of a Federal-style house. It now has an attached historic preservation easement, which guarantees that it will remain here for many more years.



David Lawlor's Conant Thread Factory photography and film documentary

The film *Run of the Mill 2: Conant Thread* and the coinciding photographs are digital preservation projects dedicated to the Conant Mill in Pawtucket and Central Falls. The film describes how Hezekiah Conant established the factory, and what has happened to the mill complex in recent years. Filmmaker David Lawlor talks about his fascination with old mill buildings, and why he is documenting them.

The Conant Thread/Coats & Clark Mill complex occupies 50 acres on the Pawtucket-Central Falls line. In 1868, Hezekiah Conant founded his thread-making operation after traveling to Scotland to learn new techniques, and forming a partnership with the Scottish Company J & P Coats. Conant's factory became an internationally-known source for cotton thread and was for many years Pawtucket's largest employer. By 1917 it had over 2,500 employees; during the 1940s there were more than 4,000. The post-war years were difficult for the company. It went through a series of mergers and became known as Coats and Clark, but production gradually declined. By 1964 operations had ceased and in 1977 a brick office and stables were demolished. The complex was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983. In March of 2020, a fire destroyed eight buildings, the rubble of which are still piled on the site.

Digital preservation of architectural resources via film and photography is a growing field that is helping researchers, architects, and historians understand the past. In the midst of large-scale development efforts, deterioration and demolition of historic buildings is difficult to prevent, and David Lawlor's work has become integral to preserving our historic resources. Many of them would otherwise be lost forever.

Conant Thread Documentary:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jAEVpDgJhik>

Photographs of Conant Thread Mill:

<https://flic.kr/s/aHBqjAjfz5>



Conant Mill building facade



Photographer and filmmaker David Lawlor

Visit our website at www.HeritagePawtucket.org for more information about our Preservation Reward Program.