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OLD YORK BEGINS RENOVATIONS AT THE PERKINS HOUSE MUSEUM

York, Maine—Old York Historical Society (OYHS) begins renovations at the Perkins House Museum this fall, and will move its administrative offices to an unused service wing of the house in the spring of 2019. The project is the result of a long-term strategic plan for buildings developed by the board of trustees and staff and begun in 2014. The plan includes the upcoming renovations at the Perkins House, as well as the creation of a much-needed storage facility for OYHS object, library, and archive collections.

OYHS currently cares for sixteen buildings, many of which are in need of significant maintenance and major renovations. With this in mind, OYHS determined to invest in, and find new and vital uses for, its core historic properties such as the Perkins House Museum and Emerson-Wilcox House Museum, and to accommodate its growing collection of more than 20,000 objects and 50,000 archival materials in a new, modern facility.

NEW COLLECTIONS AND RESEARCH CENTER

The first step in the plan was to establish a new collections storage center that provided both adequate space, and a safe environment, for the OYHS collection. The museum's storage facility in York Beach, as well as library and archival storage facility in York Village were out of space, and collections were stored in nearly every attic, closet and outbuilding of the museum's many properties. Those storage spaces were rarely climate controlled or improved, which subjected collections objects to damage from humidity and temperature swings, and from pests such as insects and rodents.

In 2014, after an extensive search in which OYHS was unable to find a building that was adequate in size or affordability in the Town of York, the museum acquired the former Kittery Family Practice building in nearby Kittery. The building was renovated to create a new collections storage center, effectively tripling the museum's storage space. The purchase and subsequent renovation of the new facility was funded through the sale of the former York Beach post office building, which the museum had been using to store a lot of its collection. The new space in Kittery provides much needed space, a modern climate control system, and handicapped accessibility on the ground floor where the library and archives will be housed. The consolidation of all the OYHS objects and archive collections in one location enables staff to better care for them, and allows more comprehensive use of the collection by researchers.

PERKINS HOUSE MUSEUM AND ADMINISTRATIVE CENTER

Originally the home of ferrymen and sea captains, the Perkins House Museum is a rambling, gabled structure situated on the York River by Sewall's Bridge. In 1898, it became the summer home of Mary Perkins and her daughter, Elizabeth, who transformed the house into an environment evocative of colonial New England. The museum preserves their original interiors and possessions.

The planned renovations at the Perkins House will achieve two major objectives: 1) provide critical renovations to the historic section of the house, and 2) create a new administrative center in the currently unused service wing of the house.

The Perkins House received renovations to its south section (a former garage) in 2001, but the rest of the building has had no structural or mechanical system upgrades in decades. The house was closed to public tours in 2014, when it was discovered that the electrical system panels were dangerously corroded, and the electricity had to be turned off.

Inadequacies in the construction of the service wing (slated to become the administrative center) in the 1920s had resulted in rotting flooring and joists in the kitchen, as well as sub-standard electric wiring, heating, and plumbing. All of these issues will be resolved in the current project, helping to protect the Perkins House and its collections for the future.

OYHS administrative offices, library, and archive collections, have outgrown the former bank building at 207 York Street in which they are housed. The sale of this building will help to fund the renovations to the Perkins House, which began in October 2018. The current plan is to move its administrative offices to the Perkins House, and the library and archives to the newly renovated and handicapped-accessible collections center in Kittery in the spring of 2019.

PERKINS HOUSE OPEN HOUSE

Curious to see what Old York has planned for the Perkins House Museum? The museum will host a public **Open House** on **Sunday, November 18**, from **1:00 to 2:45pm**, at the Perkins House Museum, located at 394 Southside Road, York, Maine. Visitors are invited to walk through the service wing, view the construction progress, and enjoy light refreshments. Dress warmly and wear comfortable shoes, as the building is currently unheated and floors are uneven.

ABOUT OLD YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

OYHS is a vital part of the York, Maine, community. The organization maintains 16 buildings and 20 properties including the 17-acre Steedman Woods; employs 5 full-time and 25 part-time employees; houses more than 20,000 artifacts and 50,000 archival materials; and serves thousands of people year round through tours, educational programs, and special events. OYHS receives no Federal, State, or Municipal support, unlike other education and preservation organizations in the community, such as the York Public Library and York Land Trust. OYHS relies on funding provided through private donations, a modest endowment, and a trust established by Elizabeth Perkins, as well as earned income from ticket sales, programs, memberships.

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