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TAYLOR HOUSE ON STATE ENDANGERED PROPERTIES LIST



The French-Taylor House is one of seven community landmarks added to the statewide endangered properties list for 2017, as announced at the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance's annual 'Seven to Save' event on Friday, October 27th. Listing to 'Seven to Save' is recognized as a powerful means to attract attention and investment to properties under threat by neglect, lack of planning, and development pressures.

Located at the center of Moultonborough Village, the French-Taylor House is significant both for its community history and for its architecture. Originally built c. 1840, the structure was expanded in the early 20th century by James E. French, the prosperous local business owner and longtime state legislator who was one of Moultonborough's most prominent citizens. After his death in 1919, Adele Blanchard acquired what was then known as the 'French House' in 1923, and the property passed through the women of her family to its last resident, Adele Taylor (also Moultonborough's longest-serving librarian).

Michael Duffy of Manchester, board member of the Preservation Alliance and chair of the 'Seven to Save' selection committee, noted how "deterioration, demolition and the desire for new investment are some of the threats to the historic properties on this list. Here are seven great opportunities to transform threatened resources into vibrant community assets once again." Preservation leaders emphasized that saving special places and retaining small-town character are essential in efforts to attract investment, draw new residents and visitors, support local businesses, and promote economic vitality.

The Taylor House, as it is known locally, stands directly across Route 25 from the Moultonborough Grange Hall, owned by the Moultonborough Historical Society and listed

to 'Seven to Save' in 2012. Loss of either or both of these buildings at the core of the historic village would severely impact Moultonborough's unique character, streetscape, and sense of place. In early September, Moultonborough Village lost a key community landmark (the former Country Fare Inn), which will soon be replaced by a retail center; the historic village area is now hemmed in by out-of-scale commercial developments.

When the Town of Moultonborough voted to acquire the Taylor House with five acres at the center of the village in March 2014, the property with its structures was seen as an asset and placeholder for future community uses. Since then, the vacant house has languished without planning, and deteriorated without proper attention and maintenance. In March, Storm Stella winds tore large shingle sections off the house and barn, leading to new water infiltration. Now, some are pushing for demolition of these buildings, claiming that the visibly neglected historic house has 'no value' to the community.

However, as noted by state architectural historian James Garvin, the house is a valuable local example of a broad-gabled Greek Revival dwelling, enlarged by lifting the roof structure and by adding a new second story to both the main house and to the wing. The house features numerous character-defining features on both its exterior and interior. It retains integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association for the period of its enlargement to the present, and retains significant structural and stylistic attributes from the period of its original construction, as seen in historic images.

In May, the Moultonborough Heritage Commission started to evaluate the French-Taylor House, focusing attention on its future community use. In June, the house received a determination of eligibility for the State Register of Historic Places from the NH Division of Historical Resources, which is the pre-requisite for state-funded study and repair grants. The Commission then successfully applied for a Building Condition Assessment study (report forthcoming). Two well-attended community open houses were held at the house in July, where members of the public voiced their support for re-use of the building.

At the 'Seven to Save' event, Commission chair Cristina Ashjian noted that "84% of respondents to the Town's 2014 'Village Vision' survey agreed that 'When planning for the future, it is important to preserve and encourage the use of historic buildings in the 'village' area.' We hope is that 'Seven to Save' status and visibility will convince Town naysayers that our heritage and remaining historic village buildings do matter, and thus help shift the conversation from demolition to resuscitation." The Taylor House's potential for public or commercial use has yet to be fully explored with a community input and planning process.

"Our small town character makes our state distinctive," said Jennifer Goodman, executive director of the Preservation Alliance. "The mix of our old with new building stock, and character and scale of historic main street buildings, attract varied ages and types of people, help incubate small businesses, and create attachments to communities that boost economic vitality." While endangered properties in small towns have been on prior 'Seven to Save' lists, this year's group is remarkable in that all the listed properties are in small towns with populations ranging from approximately 1,300 to 7,300.