



# the Bidwell House museum

## Spring 2017 Restoration Update

Thanks to the generosity of the museum's donors, the building restoration is progressing well. The front roof of the main house was completed just before New Year's, helped by cooperation from the weather gods. This included the installation of a layer of plywood and a breathing grid between the original sheathing boards and the new, historically appropriate cedar shingles. Custom-made steel joint supports in the attic will prevent further leaning of the building. On the rear ell, roof overhangs that had been removed in the 1960s were replaced.

Inside, the garret walls were opened to install insulation in the area with the most serious ice damming problems. Electrical wiring was replaced throughout the museum, and the electric panel moved to the cellar. The office, in the upstairs of the 1820s ell, was gutted. New insulation will greatly reduce heat loss here.

The carpentry crew moved to the west side, where they replaced an 18-foot section of the plate beam that had rotted from decades of moisture, in addition to the roof. This roof was completed in mid-February, marking the half-way point of Phase 1B restoration ahead of schedule to cheers all around. It was a bit too soon to celebrate.

On February 23rd, significant rot was discovered in the west wall of the ell (see photos). Repairs will require replacing two more beams, studs, sheathing and siding and two window frames. But an interesting result of uncovering the west wall



*Installation of the breathing grid on the 1820s ell*

was revealing the juncture between the original 1760s saltbox frame and the 1820s ell (see photo on reverse).

Then, on February 25th, the weather gods sent an "undetermined weather event" right across the Bidwell House Museum property, downing numerous trees and narrowly missing the house itself. Debris slammed into the gutter and roof of the 1840s wing with such force that the gutter is crushed and the roofing damaged. The storm also tore off the power and phone lines, sparking an electrical surge that damaged the furnace and computers.

The museum was lucky. No trees landed on a building, large limbs narrowly missed the horse barn and "Piggery." The same freak February storm – a front dropping the temperature from 67 to 30 degrees within an hour – destroyed several homes and barns in Conway, Mass., about 30 miles to the northeast.

Unfortunately, the damaged roof



*New cedar shingles on the front roof*



*Steel joint support in the attic*



*Replacement of roof overhangs on ell*



*Exposed west wall of the 1820s ell, with completed roof*



*The February 25th storm downed numerous trees*



*Juncture between 1760s and 1820s frames*

and destroyed gutters were brand-new, installed in Phase 1A restoration this past spring. Total damage to the building is likely to be \$30,000. The museum is counting on insurance help. Damage to trees has not been totaled. Suffice it to say, there is months of chain-sawing and enough fire wood for the whole neighborhood. The museum is also applying for emergency aid from the Massachusetts Historical Commission to help pay for the unexpected beam replacements.



*Large maple on stone wall below museum*



*Installation of the new electrical panel*

The contractor remains optimistic about completing the restoration by Museum Opening Day, Sunday, May 28th, even if the storm repairs are not quite done. They are now working on the north side, and the chimney will be repointed soon. We are cheering them on every day!



*Crushed gutter and roof damage*



*Moisture damage in the west wall*



*Can you see the Reverend's ghost in his tree?*



*Snapped tree below the museum*

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