

September 6, 2023

Subject:

A proposal for a barn to house the rebuilt coach and free up the first floor of the firehouse for other appropriate purposes

A year ago we sent out some preliminary ideas for this building. Since then, we hired a local Gloucester architect, Anthony Macchi.

Unsurprisingly, he has some really good ideas! We distribute these now and look forward to discussing them in depth at the next meeting of the Executive Committee. They are NOT embargoed, so please feel free to show them to friends, families, and other interested parties. Rita prepared the following memo:

Points in favor of a barn for the stagecoach

The stagecoach is a work of art, a demonstration of conservation/restoration, plus, a focus for the history of transportation in Gloucester.

However:

The height of the coach is nearly that of the ceiling, i.e., 8 foot 6 inches.

Restored roof seat and luggage rack are on the floor.

Space available to walk around the coach is severely limited.

At present, we keep stagecoach artifacts, returned by the conservators, on the floor under the coach.

The Firehouse is packed with Annisquam's history. Many items that are important in demonstrating that history are on the second floor and poorly displayed.

Because of narrow, steep stairs, and those being the only means of exit, the second floor is unlikely to be approved for public access.

The stagecoach now blocks access to wall space that could be used for photographs, maps, historical timelines, etc.

Records of Annisquam institutions (e.g., Sewing Circle, Art Gallery) cannot be stored in archival conditions, at present, for lack of space in the Firehouse.

We would like to:

Stage exhibits on the ground floor without the crowding that is currently an issue.

On rotation, bring interesting items on the second floor to the ground floor.

Have more space for visitors to view photographs, documents, maps, artifacts.

Move boxed items/files, which are now on the ground floor, into more efficient storage units upstairs.

In sum:

With the stagecoach in a barn, the ground floor of the Firehouse would provide more space for historical research and displays.

In the barn, a group could easily see the coach in its entirety, and be able to hear and participate in a presentation without disturbing others in the Firehouse.

The barn would have emergency exits and handicap access.

Anthony wrote to us as follows:

I think the question that they powers that be need to answer is what they feel about the restored carriage. Is it something that should be stuffed in the corner or respected, cherished and displayed correctly? If it is to be respected then a container for it should be built. This way it can exist and be appreciated by people that want to look at it.

And we wrote back to Anthony

1 as new construction, it is much less complicated to build and so should be less expensive than an attached addition

2 it permits the barn to echo the architectural features of the Greek revival firehouse, from the roof angle right down to the “pigeon perches” under the end of the roof and the classical pediments over the doors.

3 the separate building allows barn doors high enough to let the coach roll in and out with the roof rack and seat on top. The windows and

doorway on the east of the firehouse would remain untouched and fully functional.

4 two buildings mean that the barn can be closed off to visitors to the firehouse, or vice versa

5 the bridging roof over the space between buildings not only will keep the rain out, but it will also provide/hide connections such as wiring and piping for the sprinkler system

6 the open space between the two buildings will let in both people and light and minimize any “tunnel” effects along the gravel path

7 the firehouse would remain closed off, but open for business, during the construction

8 we avoid opening an old wall of the firehouse with all the possible attendant ugly surprises, such as powder post beetles and shot sills

9 fire fighting and security would be simpler

10 two fire exits

A point worthy of special, separate mention:

While we do not yet have firm estimates of costs, we believe that we now have most of the required funds set aside.

Anthony’s “Scheme C is attached as a separate document.

David and Rita Teele, AHS

