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# Bourne Resident Calls For Preserving Former Visitor Center

*GENE M. MARCHAND/ENTERPRISE*

5–6 minutes

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Questions and concerns have been raised over a small building situated on the property near the Bourne Rotary that is being considered for a new Cumberland Farms gas station/convenience store. The suggestion has been made that the structure is of historic value and should be preserved.

Bourne resident Jack MacDonald said the small building, which most recently housed the Old Silver Beach Watersports Surf Shop, dates back to the early 1900s. Mr. MacDonald has offered as evidence of the building's age a photograph from 1909 that he claims includes the structure.

The photo is an aerial shot of Buzzards Bay and shows train tracks, a depot and rail cars. Large cranes with steam exhaust, along with large piles of dirt, are seen in the background. The photo is captioned "Cape Cod Canal...Beginning The Foundation For The New Rail Road Bridge At Buzzards Bay, Mass. October 1909."

In an email to Bourne Town Planner Coreen V. Moore, Mr. MacDonald said a small building in the photo, located in front of

the depot, was the “Ticket Agent Office.” He said it is the same building now located on MacArthur Boulevard, bordering the Nickerson-Bourne Funeral Home parking lot.

“Not only is it the sole survivor of any early Bourne Rotary structures,” Mr. MacDonald said, “it is the only structure that survived pre-CANAL railroad yard structures!”

He urged the Bourne Historic Commission, Ms. Moore and the Bourne Planning Board to “step up and PROTECT this historic resource.” He also called it “proper and our duty” to research the building’s history fully and to bring the matter to a demolition delay hearing, per town bylaw, before the Bourne Historical Commission.

Article 3.14 of the town bylaws includes definitions of structures for which the historical commission is empowered to advise the town building inspector relative to demolition permits. The purpose of the bylaw is to allow demolition “under conditions designed to minimize the loss of distinctive features of significant buildings.”

The bylaw defines a significant building as “any building or portion thereof which in whole or in part is more than 75 years old or is listed in the historical survey of the Town of Bourne and on file with the Bourne historical commission.”

In an email to planning board chairman Daniel L. Doucette and vice chairman Elmer I. Clegg, Ms. Moore informed both men of Mr. MacDonald’s concerns. She said her own research, including town assessor’s information and Geographic Information System data, determined that the building was constructed sometime around 1970 or 1959.

“Therefore, the age of the building that can be documented is 63 years,” she said, “not the 75 years as required by the demo delay

bylaw.”

Ms. Moore added that the chairman of the historical commission, Carl Georgeson, and the commission’s secretary, Deborah M. Burgess, were copied on the email in the hope that they might have documentation as to the building’s age. She said she had no information requiring her to refer the matter to the historical commission.

Ms. Burgess refuted some of what Ms. Moore had to say about the building’s possible history. Ms. Burgess said the building was owned years ago by the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, which ran it as an information booth.

In fact, two identical booths were run by the chamber, Ms. Burgess said. One stood at the old Sagamore Rotary, after it was moved from its original location where Route 130 meets Route 6A, she said. It was eventually moved to the Aptucxet Trading Post property when the new flyover was constructed in 2006, she said. It now serves as the Bourne Historical Society’s Museum Gift Shop.

As for the building on MacArthur Boulevard, Ms. Burgess said she cannot be certain it is the one that was originally in Buzzards Bay. She did, however, contest the built date in the assessor’s records for the Bourne booth. She said the building is “certainly older than 1970.”

Ms. Burgess said she found newspaper articles that referenced the two information booths but did not mention their exact locations. A 1929 article referenced Buzzards Bay and Sagamore, and a 1940 interview said the Sagamore Information Booth opened in 1928.

Yet another article from 1947 said the two information booths were “open for the first year since 1942” for the benefit of vacationers. The article confirms the booths were open since at least 1942, she said, but does not confirm whether the Buzzards Bay booth is the one now on MacArthur Boulevard.

“Does this building meet the 75-year demolition delay bylaw?” Ms. Burgess said, referring to the MacArthur Boulevard structure.

“Hard to say without better proof. It would take more research.”

Mr. MacDonald has requested that the matter be addressed by the historical commission. In the meantime, the planning board is scheduled to vote on comprehensive permit/site plan review for the new Cumberland Farms project yesterday evening, Thursday, January 27.