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A little nod to tourism



BOURNE — A tiny storage building at the Sagamore Rotary that could be the Cape's oldest tourist information booth will be saved from the wrecking ball.

Not only will the 16-by-20-foot Cape Cod cottage-style structure be spared, but it could be moved to the grounds of the Aptucxet Trading Post museum in Bourne as early as next month.

Jack MacDonald, a member of the Bourne Historic Commission and the Bourne Historical Society, spearheaded the effort to save the 77-year-old cottage owned by the Cape Cod Canal Region Chamber of Commerce.

MacDonald said research indicates the building - about twice the size of an average garden shed - may well be the oldest of its kind on the Cape.

He said the building was formerly owned by the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce, whose records are inconclusive when it comes to identifying the Cape's earliest tourist center.

"It may have been the first," said MacDonald, whose grandmother and great-grandmother both worked at the cottage when it was a full-fledged tourist information booth.

More recently the Canal Region chamber has used the cottage for storage, while a slightly larger neighboring building, also owned by the chamber, has served as an information booth. Both structures are scheduled for demolition to make room for the Sagamore flyover project.

After being approached by MacDonald in January, Canal Region chamber officials said they would donate the buildings to anyone willing to remove them from the rotary.

Since then, MacDonald, a carpenter from Pocasset, has made it his mission to save the cottage. The other structure is expected to be razed.

Built in 1928, the cottage originally sat at the foot of the old Sagamore Drawbridge before it was moved to Sandwich, MacDonald said. Around 1937-1938, it was moved to its current site at the northern base of the Sagamore Bridge.

Hayden Building Movers will handle the relocation project. Kirk Ducharme, an official with the Cotuit-based company, said it will be moved sometime within the next two weeks to Aptucxet. There it will join other historical artifacts and structures including the remnants of a 1627 trading post that originally existed on the site. The museum site also includes a Dutch-style windmill and a railroad station built for President Grover Cleveland so he could access his summer home at Gray Gables.

Aptucxet means "little trap by the river."

MacDonald said he hopes the new location will breathe new life into the cottage, which "needs work," including shingles and replacing rotted wood.

The push to move the building has been a joint effort of the historical society and historic commission, he said. A fundraising campaign will be launched to spruce up the cottage, MacDonald added.

The 77-year-old building itself is not necessarily historic. But MacDonald said the cottage's original function - a venue that dispensed visitor information - is a nod to the origins of Cape Cod's tourism industry.

"It's not about the building itself," he said. "It's about the people who worked there."

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