

BRIDGETON-BASED PRESERVATIONISTS RECEIVES MAJOR NEW JERSEY TRUST CAPITAL GRANT FOR REPAIRS TO “NAIL HOUSE” NATIONAL REGISTER SITE AT ENTRANCE TO BRIDGETON CITY PARK

Bridgeton, NJ, November 11, 2017

For immediate release

Bridgeton’s non-profit Center for Historic American Building Arts (CHABA) has received its first major restoration grant from the New Jersey Historic Trust.

Under a cooperative agreement with the City of Bridgeton, the almost-\$94,000 award will support structural repairs to the small, vernacular structure known as the Nail House at the entrance to Bridgeton City Park, once the administrative office or “counting-house” of the Cumberland Nail & Iron Works and known in later years as the Nail Mill Office Museum.

It is the only award to a Cumberland County historic site in this latest 2017 Capital Preservation I grant round.

Effectively closed in 2011, the over-200-year-old City-owned building has long been the focus of efforts to address structural defects, first with a City-based Watson & Henry Preservation Plan (2013), followed by a CHABA-based 1772 Foundation award for an engineering study this past year. J&M Engineering of Swarthmore, PA, defined the scope of repair work under this last contract, helping provide a partial match for the present award.

This latest State grant will cover about three-fifths of remaining essential repair costs, with the rest shared by the City of Bridgeton and CHABA through both in-kind and financial commitments under a cooperative public-private agreement.

“These basic repairs will bring the Nail House back to code,” said Margaret DeMarco, project manager for the recent study phase of the project, work she says is critical to interpretation of the building as last remnant of Bridgeton’s early contributions to American industry.

“This is a green light for all of us, as we move on to telling its story as both a New Jersey and national historic site,” said Dr Flavia Alaya, CHABA director, who also acknowledged recent County Cultural & Heritage Commission support for a forthcoming ‘intergenerational’ children’s book, already in the works, that aims the Nail House story at new audiences.

Called *This Little Building is HUGE!*, the book stresses what Alaya calls ‘the counterintuitive story’ of how the ironworks actually built Bridgeton (including what is now the largest historic district in the state) “nail-by-nail and pipe-by-pipe,” and yet somehow managed to spare the upstream watershed that was to become the City Park.

“We like to call it a ‘Grunge to Green’ narrative,” she said. “We think stories like this can tell how transformative this history was, and capture a bit of the magic of the place, helping it resonate with everyone who cares about the future of this and all post-industrial urban communities.”

As a preservationist non-profit, she says, CHABA actually stresses environmental sustainability. “More than a hundred years have passed since the Nail Works left Bridgeton, yet its story is still a part of the Park. It extends even to its remarkable and beloved Cohanzick Zoo—the most

visited destination in Cumberland County, as well as to the historic district, largest in New Jersey, with over 2200 individual properties,” she says.

“But it also radiates beyond Bridgeton to the amazing historic and natural amenities of the rest of the Cohansey rivershed. This makes the Nail House a kind of ‘portal’ to the whole remarkable piece of the planet known as the Jersey Bayshore.”

She said that the process of vetting contractors should begin soon, with repairs projected to be underway by Spring, 2018.

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Contact: CHABA at 856-369-1300 or <centerhabarts@gmail.com>.

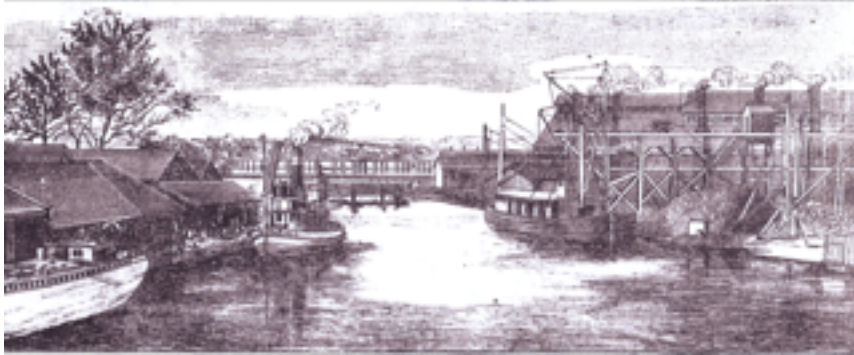
More information on CHABA and this project at http://historicbuildingarts.org/HistoricBuildingArts/NailHouse_Crowdfunding_Project.html

Photos/images, in order of attachment (NOTE: larger images are available on request):

1. A recent photo of the Nail House on Mayor Aitken Drive near the entrance to the Bridgeton City Park. (Alaya, CHABA, 2015)
2. J&M Engineers consult on structural issues with historic architect Penny Watson of Watson&Henry Associates and James Bergmann, a local craftsman-expert in historic construction (Alaya, CHABA, 2016)
3. J&M Engineers review engineering calculations of the support beams in the Nail House basement. (Alaya, CHABA, 2016)
4. Proposed cover art for “This Little Building is HUGE!” (CHABA)
5. Mid-19th Century etching shows the spread of the Cumberland Nail Works—docks, buildings and barges—on both sides of the Cohansey River at Commerce Street.
6. Early 20th-century postcard showing the Nail House as a kind of magic portal to the Bridgeton City Park, recently created out of the City-purchased and preserved upriver properties of the Cumberland Works.







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