



## Washington Historical Society Newsletter

SPRING 2008 EDITION

### PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



New England in general, and Washington, N.H. in particular, have always welcomed the change of the seasons. In 2008, Spring is anticipated with more than the usual eagerness since it follows an "old-fashioned Winter" with deep drifts of snow present even as we write, approaching records set over 100 years ago.

As in the past, the Washington Historical Society will meet on the second Monday of each month from April through November at Camp Morgan Lodge. A 6 P.M. potluck dinner is followed by the business meeting at 7 P.M. and the presentation at 7:30 P.M.

Jim Crandall has scheduled a very attractive series of programs ranging from the very local histories of the Eccardt Farm and General Store, and presentations on aspects of World War II, which will complement the continued and enlarged exhibit in our museum, and informative stories about the styles of horse-drawn carriages and effects of the Revolutionary War in our area. New Hampshire's "raconteur-in-residence" Judson Hale will head up the August meeting.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find a useful and much appreciated undertaking by Gwen Gaskell recapitulating our first 25 years. Do follow her recommendation to visit the museum this summer to more fully see some of the artifacts and pictures she mentions.

We will be gathering volunteers for the museum and schoolhouse at our early meetings. As always the Board appreciates your help, presence, donations and ideas.

Spring is here! We look forward to seeing you soon at the museum and barn.

Sincerely,  
 Bob Evans  
 President, Washington Historical Society

## THE FIRST 25 YEARS OF THE WASHINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*By Gwen Gaskell*

This summer there will be a display at the museum of the first 25 years of the Historical Society. We have taken part in many community activities, programs and jobs, which should serve to make people aware that we are active and hard at work. The following will highlight a few of our activities during each year. Please come by this summer and see many pictures with explanations and lots more information. We will be looking forward to your visit.

1982	<p>In October an informational meeting was held, at which time a committee of 6 people was chosen to investigate further ideas, intents and ideals.</p> <p>On December 13 the Charter meeting was held. By-Laws were approved and adopted. Memberships were taken and the Charter was signed by 55 members.</p>
1983	<p>On January 5th the Charter was recorded by the Secretary of State and on January 7th by the Town Clerk. There was a discussion of possible projects which included: cataloging graveyards, fund raising projects?cookbook, pie sale, shortcake social, town pound preservation, safe space for storage, finding old family burial grounds and making recommendations to the selectmen on the naming of town roads.</p> <p>In July the Penniman School was offered by the MacNeil Farm Realty Trust.</p> <p>Much investigating and many professional opinions were sought as well as a search for a place to put it.</p>
1984	<p>The March Town Meeting denied the site proposal for placement on the north edge of the Town Common.</p> <p>We were informed that a 9-cent postage stamp would be issued next June, honoring General Sylvanus Thayer.</p>
1985	<p>In July work was started on getting our town common and buildings placed on the National Register of Historic Places. In August a display was set up at the Toby Jug barn for the Old Home Day celebration.</p>
1986	<p>Carol Farnsworth passed away just shy of his 102nd birthday.</p> <p>In April word was received that the Town Common and Buildings were now accepted by the National Historical Society as a registered Historic Site.</p>
1987	<p>Donations were received to order Historic Tree seedlings. Apparently none of the seedlings survived until they could be planted permanently.</p>

	<p>The Washington School Board inquired about the Historical Society taking over the East Washington District #5 School House, and another investigation began.</p>
1988	<p>The restoration of the Civil War Monument fence was delegated to the Historic Society, along with \$800 for expenses by a vote at the Town meeting in March.</p> <p>In August the Society accepted an offer from the Old Home Day Committee to set up displays in the town hall for the August celebration in 1989. We also accepted an offer to take part in the Constitutional Bicentennial Day celebration in Concord.</p> <p>Kay Dunleavy expressed her interest in preserving the District #5 School House.</p>
1989	<p>In March the Historical Society was voted at town meeting to be the owners of the District #5 School. A "School Day" was planned for July to start raising funds for upkeep of the building. In October Kay Dunleavy presented a letter to set up a trust fund for the perpetual care of the school.</p>
1990	<p>The foundation of the District #5 School House was repaired. The cemetery census project continued and the town pound was cleaned up.</p>
1991	<p>The Gage Fund was set up for the care of the exterior of the District #5 School House.</p> <p>There was a schoolhouse day celebration and the baptismal steps in East Washington were recognized as historic.</p> <p>The N.H. Old Graveyard Association was hosted by the Society.</p>
1992	<p>The present museum building, formerly Half Moon Antiques, became available. Finances were worked out and the transaction was completed in April. A safe was purchased for \$500 and serious fund raising began. On the Society's 10th anniversary the smallest loan was paid in full.</p>
1993	<p>An Old Engine Show was held at the Camp Morgan ball field, an auction by Richard Withington was held in the yard of the brick house in the town center and Good Old Days were celebrated on the Town Common.</p> <p>Work continued on the museum building, display tables were made and display cases were donated to us. A security system was installed and historical society items stored in the Town Archives were moved in. A barn loom, which had been stored in town for over 100 years, was installed and made operable.</p>
1994	<p>A large door was cut into the back of the building's basement and the safe and East Washington hearse were moved in. New stairs were built and track lighting was purchased for the display area.</p>

	Application for a Conservation Assessment Grant was made. Christmas plants were sold as a fundraiser.
1995	The Conservation Assessment Grant was awarded and assessments of the museum and the District #5 School House were made. A skit was put on by the museum committee for the Friday evening opening of Old Home Day weekend, a supper was served on Saturday evening and a "Sheep to Shawl" float was entered in the parade. A large boulder with a chiseled inscription was retrieved from construction at Cram's Corner and placed in the museum yard. Our mortgage was paid in full.
1996	Dedication of several old millstones from area mills was held at Cram's Corner. The old chimney was removed from the museum building and a metal roof put on the building. A fund was started for a heating system.
1997	A woven throw of Washington scenes was designed and so many were sold by pre-order that we had to double the first order before they were made. Two Rinni gas heaters were installed; new steps and a handicapped ramp were built at the museum. The Town Building float was entered in the Hillsborough parade.
1998	The museum building was sided with white vinyl and new windows were installed in the front. Tapestry tote bags and throw pillows were ordered in fall foliage colors as fundraisers. Windows at the District #5 School House were scraped, glass reset, glazed and painted. Glass shelves were purchased for the museum display cases. We hosted a Camp Morgan reunion and gained a lot of pictures and information about the camp when it was the Worcester, MA, YMCA summer camp. A float carrying the old Washington hearse was entered in the East Washington Grange parade. Lexan was put over the windows at the District #5 School House to protect the sash and add security. The stairway at the museum was closed off with a wall and door at the foot of the stairs. The first "Sidewalk Café" during the Wool Arts Tour was held at the Mirage Alpacas Farm as a fundraiser.
1999	A new dehumidifier was purchased for the museum basement. Roll-up shades were purchased and installed at the District #5 School House. A School House Float was entered in the Old Home Day parade.
2000	The Society provided information and pictures for a book and film on the history and the origins of the Seventh Day Adventist Church. A copy of each was given to the Society. A new coded security system was installed at the museum and a committee was

	<p>formed to study the feasibility of owning the barn next door owned by the Bruen family. A computer was purchased by the Society for keeping records of acquisitions. The interior of the District #5 School House was repainted, having last been done in 1967. The Society sponsored the Antrim Players for two evenings of a variety show in the upstairs of the town hall.</p> <p><i>[webmaster: The WHS Web Site was first created in 2000]</i></p>
2001	<p>A contract was signed for a new roof at the District #5 School House. Mugs depicting the town buildings were purchased for a fundraiser. The Society ran a food booth at the Hopkinton Fair grounds for the Sheep and Wool Festival on Mothers Day weekend and for the 3rd year we ran the Sidewalk Café on Columbus Day weekend.</p>
2002	<p>The District #5 School House roof was finished in May and extensive work done on the interior of the school. A large gas grille was purchased second hand for our fund raising events. The School House was reopened for Labor Day weekend. Negotiations began for transferring the barn to the Society.</p>
2003	<p>A Quilt Documentation Day was held at Camp Morgan Lodge. In October the Bruen family sold the old carriages from the barn and donated the barn building to the Society. Work began clearing an old floor out of the barn basement to make it ready for work in the spring. "Nellie's Diary" became of much interest and three members spent much of the following winter transcribing and analyzing it. It has since become a fruitful resource for generating interest in mid-1800 Washington events.</p>
2004	<p>Starting in June, Richard Thompson of Cornish was hired to work on the barn preservation. Phil Barker cut the lumber needed on his mill. Ladies started making a "Barn Quilt" showing the 52 remaining barns in Washington, to help raise funds for the barn preservation.</p> <p>Jerry Johnson, the man who found Nellie's Diary in a Florida antique shop came to visit Washington and meet the people who made the diary "come to life" for him. We walked him "all over town" as Nellie would have done. He donated the actual diary to the Society's collection.</p> <p>The underpinnings of the barn and a new floor were completed and we celebrated with a barn dance on October 23rd. State Senator Bob O'Dell presented the barn committee, consisting of Jim Gaskell, Phil Barker and Richard Crane, with certificates of a State Senate Resolution "In Recognition of Dedication and Hard Work to Renovate and Restore the Washington Historical Society Barn."</p>

2005	<p>The N.H. Preservation Alliance invited us to display the "Barn Quilt" with raffle tickets for sale at the Old Home and Barn Expo in Manchester to help us raise funds.</p> <p>We operated the food booth at the Hopkinton Mothers Day weekend Wool Festival for our 5th and last year. A new sign was donated to the Society by Ken Reed.</p> <p>Two barn sales were held to sell items donated to the Society for use or to sell. Clapboards were purchased from Maine via the Internet for the exterior of the barn. Volunteers trimmed and stained them before installation - the high peak in back was done by Richard Thompson's crew but the rest was done by Society volunteers. "Shoe the Scoot" demonstrations were held at the barn.</p> <p>The October "Sidewalk Café" was barely successful this year due to heavy rains and floods. Drawing was held for the Barn Quilt raffle, which raised \$4240.</p>
2006	<p>The Executive Director of the Preservation Alliance spoke at our regular May meeting and presented Phil Barker, Jim Gaskell, Richard Crane and Richard Thompson with certificates of recognition for their work in "Preservation, Planning and Education" on the Society's barn. The following day they and our Society were again recognized at formal ceremonies at the N.H. Historical Society in Concord.</p> <p>The hearse was moved back to the barn from the museum basement. The old kitchen display was set up and an old cider press was acquired from the old Hurd home. The final coat of stain and trim paint was put on the barn and the alarm system was expanded to include the barn. A barn dance was held at the Alpaca farm the weekend following the Wool Arts Tour.</p>
2007	<p>Specifications were sent out to replace the foundation at the rear end of the basement. The work was done and it was realized that the interior could easily be insulated and finished off as a heated office/archive space, so the temporary wall became permanent.</p> <p>Artist Jean Kluk donated two watercolor paintings of the barn as fundraisers.</p> <p>The Sunapee Historical Society visited the museum and barn and SooNipi magazine ran articles on the District #5 School House and the barn and museum. The Society was invited to enter quilts in the quilt documentation show in Lowell, MA, as well as in the Lempster Old Home Day quilt show.</p> <p>Volunteers served food at the "Sidewalk Café" on Columbus Day weekend for our 9th year of participation and we held our 3rd barn dance on the following weekend.</p>

## WINTERS IN HEW HAMPSHIRE

*By Richard Crane*

What a winter! Some areas here have recorded 100+ inches of snow where they only had less than a tenth of that last winter at this time, and there is more coming every few days.

At this time I think how we used to cut ice and store it for use in the old wooden iceboxes (before the refrigerator). More often than not these ice boxes stood by the back kitchen door as the melting ice water ran out through a hole in the back. Although most iceboxes are made of oak, there is one in the Barn Museum made of pine. Also, the museum has an excellent collection of tools used for cutting ice which were donated to us by the Fowle family, together with a series of photographs of them using the tools cutting ice for their camp on Long Pond, now known as Highland Lake.

Perley Crane and family used to cut ice on the pond and used it to keep milk cold at the farm during the warmer weather and hot summer days.



*It would take two men to slide the ice block up a ramp to the icehouse for storage.*

As a young lad, I helped my Uncle Elmer (Dimp) harvest ice at the Hillsboro Girls Camp (Peace Pond) or Nissen's Pond as some called it. This was generally done during our Christmas vacation from school. If the ice wasn't at least 12 inches thick we would have to wait and cut it a little later. We used horses and a "Grover" to mark out and partially cut the blocks to a depth of about 10 inches... Later the cakes of ice were hand sawed or split the rest of the way. When the cakes of ice were pulled from the cold water and headed for the icehouse for storage in saw dust for insulation, there was an open hole of considerable size left in the ice. Many of the men fell in this hole, as it was very slippery working on the wet edge, pulling out the cakes, sawing and chiseling the cakes to separate them. Neil Woodrow, Harry Nissen and my father all had a "bath" at one time or another when the temperature was somewhere one side or the other of zero. They were pulled out, put into a warm (?) truck, with clothes freezing solid, and rushed home to get dry and warm.



*Line of newly cut blocks of ice waiting to be moved into an icehouse on Highland Lake*

One time Kenneth Crane, Junior Bumford and Richard Crane went spinning around in Ken's Model A Ford Coupe on the glare ice and oh what fun, till his car spun around and headed right for an "Ice Hole". The car was out of control and just as it got to the hole it swerved and barely missed the corner. "Dimp" Elmer Crane really gave us all a very loud and serious talking to in language I can almost hear as I write this.

*Pictures are from a set of photographs on display at the Washington Historical Society's Barn. They were taken in the 1940's by Robert D. Wild and donated by Ken Fowle to the Society in 1993, on behalf of the family of Fred W. Hill.*



*Pulling a block of ice out of Highland Lake Oscar Hills, Charles Weber and Fred Hill.*

Drop in at the museum barn this summer to see the ice exhibit as well as the other displays.



## WINNER OF BARN PAINTING



*Linda Hagedorn, pictured at the barn last fall when she came to pick up the prize after last fall's drawing in the raffle of barn paintings by Jean Kluk. Her ticket was purchased during the Wool Arts Tour at the Mirage Alpaca farm last October.*

The winner of the raffle for watercolor painting of the Barn was chosen at the Christmas Craft Fair last fall is pictured above. She chose the summer scene, which means that the winter view, pictured below, will be the prize at the raffle this year in November. Raffle tickets are available at \$1 each and are available at the Barn, at the Museum and at other functions of the Society during the summer. The paintings were done by Jean Kluk, who has a home on Island Pond. Sets of note cards showing the two paintings are also available and are for sale at the barn and at the museum.



*A photograph of the remaining Jean Kluk watercolor painting of the barn, to be given as a prize this fall at the Christmas Craft Fair in November.*

## In Memoriam

Our Fall 2007 issue contained a picture of Myrtle (Crane) Merrill, taken at the barn during last summer's Crane Family Reunion, presenting a plaque to Jim Gaskell honoring her father, Perley Crane on his many years of service to the Washington community. Sadly we have to record that Myrtle died early this year, at the age of 90. She had specified that "donations in lieu of flowers" at her funeral could be made to our Society and the response has been most generous. She surely was a very well liked and respected member of the family.

## Late Breaking News

**Late-breaking news, as we go to press.** The Manchester TV station reports: **MANCHESTER, N.H.** -- This winter pushed further into the record books on Friday [March 28th] when enough snow fell to push it from the fourth-snowiest winter to the second-snowiest winter of all time. The storm made this the snowiest winter since 1873-74, when 122 inches of snow fell. So far, 115.2 inches of snow have fallen in the state this year, as measured at the Concord airport.

The total snowfall at the center of Washington, according to the folks that monitor it here, was 120"

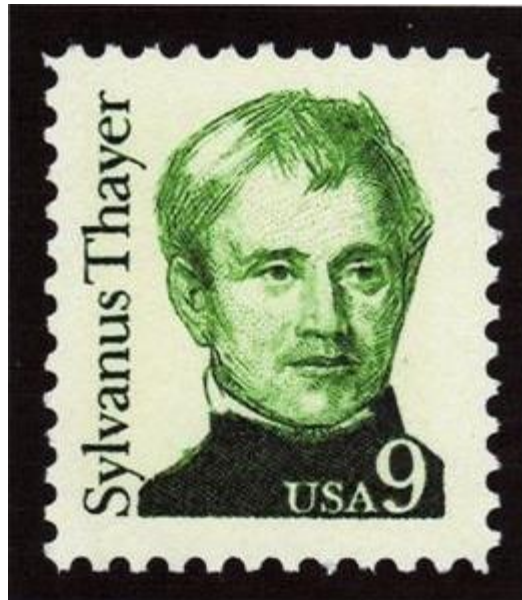
## SYLVANUS THAYER

*by Tom Talpey*

This article was composed using materials collected by Jim Reilly and presented to the Museum. Jim was a mechanical engineering graduate of the University of Michigan and a member of our Society. He and his family spent many summers here in Washington. As an engineer, Jim had a special interest in Sylvanus Thayer, who began his education as a student in the Washington Schools and eventually became known as the "Father of West Point." Jim died in 2006. His wife, Betty, maintains a family membership in our society. Their three sons are all engineers.

Near the parking lot to the south of the Town Hall there is a bronze tablet mounted on a granite boulder summarizing the career of Brigadier General Sylvanus Thayer, who was an early proponent of engineering studies. He was born in Braintree, MA, on June 9, 1785, to Nathaniel and Dorcas (Faxon) Thayer and at the age of eight was sent to Washington to live with his Uncle Azariah Faxon, his mother's brother.

Azariah was a storekeeper and the schoolmaster at the District #1 School, which at that time was a one-room brick building, located between the Town Hall and the Congregational Church in the center of town. They lived in what is now known as the Faxon House, built by his uncle in the early 1790s. Over the more than 200 years since this house was built it has served mainly as a private residence. However, it received some local notoriety from 1900 to 1935 when it was operated as an inn and small hotel known as the Capital House, under the proprietorship of Sumner Ball and his wife. With an addition (no longer standing) it would accommodate from 35 to 40 guests and advertised "Special Sunday Dinners" for guests and local customers.



*U.S. Postal Stamp in the Great American Series, showing a likeness of Sylvanus Thayer as he might have looked near the start of his West Point Career. Issued in June 1985 to commemorate his 200th birthday.*

Sylvanus Thayer, when he reached the age of 17, taught for a year in the same one room school where he had begun his education and the following year entered Dartmouth College. Specializing in mathematics and science, he graduated in 1807 as valedictorian and was appointed by President Thomas Jefferson as a cadet at the United States Military Academy at West Point. A year later he graduated, again at the top of his class, and was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant in the Army Corps of Engineers. During the War of 1812 he was promoted to Captain and directed the fortification and defense of Norfolk, Virginia. Some historians credit his work for preventing the British from capturing the fort and he was awarded the brevet of Major for distinguished service. In 1815, during James Madison's presidency, he was sent to Europe by the War Department to study military education and engineering and while there he amassed a collection of over 1000 texts on science and mathematics and 500 charts and maps, which today form a valuable historical and technological nucleus at the U. S. Military Academy's library.

After his return from Europe in 1817, President James Monroe appointed him Superintendent of the U. S. Military Academy, where he transformed the Academy into the nation's first 4-year engineering college. He was promoted, first to Colonel and then to Major during his tenure at West Point, where he had brought order, discipline and scholarship, as well as introducing their famed honor system. Today Thayer Hall at the Military Academy is named in his honor. He remained as Superintendent until 1833, when he resigned after a disagreement with President Andrew Jackson over reinstatement of dismissed students through political pressure. (He certainly had contact with a number of U. S. Presidents!)

He returned to active duty in the U. S. Corps of Engineers and was appointed the "Superintending Engineer for the construction of Forts Warren, Winthrop and Independence and the sea walls of Boston Harbor." Fort Warren is "now considered an outstanding example of nineteenth century military construction. The Boston Harbor forts were still in use during World War II."\* He retired from the Army in 1863 at the age of 78. He never married.

Not content to sit idle in retirement, he turned his energy and savings toward philanthropic projects. He endowed the Thayer School of Engineering at Dartmouth College in 1867, gave it a library of 2000 volumes on military science, architecture and civil engineering and took an active part in organizing and managing the newly formed discipline.

He financed the creation of the Thayer Public Library in his birth town of Braintree, where he lived at the home of his youngest sister, but the library did not actually open until 1874, two years after his death.

Finally, in his will, he set forth in detail his plans for the founding of a school in Braintree, MA, the Thayer Academy, which his trustees carried out with the remainder of his assets after his death. The Thayer Academy opened in 1877 and is still operating today as a private elementary and secondary school for grades 6 through 12, with about 650 students.

In 1985, on the occasion of his 200th birthday, the U. S. Postal Service issued a 9-cent stamp celebrating General Sylvanus Thayer as part of their Great Americans Series.

That, in brief is the story behind the bronze plaque on the town common, placed there in 1976 during the Bicentennial of the Incorporation of the Town of Washington and which, in the words inscribed on the plaque, "commemorates the 14 formative years, 1793-1807, that Sylvanus Thayer spent here [in the very center of Washington] learning the precepts of Honor, Discipline and Education, that form a Triangle of Leadership" which made him such an outstanding engineer.

\* Quotations are from a biographical booklet written by Lillian H. Wentworth and published by the Braintree Historical Society in 1995. Other material was drawn from "The Thayer Academy, One Hundred Years" also by Miss Wentworth, a limited publication of the Thayer Academy, and Wikipedia, a free encyclopedia on the Internet. The first two sources are from the material donated to our Historical Society by Jim Reilly, who gathered them during visits to the Thayer Academy in Braintree, to the Thayer School at Dartmouth and to the Braintree Historical Society.

Tom Talpey writes:

After this article was finished an interesting link was discovered. Our new Vice President and Program Chairman, Jim Crandall, grew up in Braintree, MA, and is a graduate of the Thayer Academy.

## **HEDGEHOGS AND LIVESTOCK**

*by Richard Crane*

Hedgehogs, Quill Pigs or Porcupines are all the same wild animal with quills and were bad for the cattle and sheep. These animals would be in the pastures to eat the leaves and bark of trees, the cattle and sheep would get curious and would get close to smell them and then the porcupine would slap them in the face with their tail. Sheep would then butt the porcupine and get more quills. What a mess! Thus we had to keep a sharp eye on the livestock as they could not eat or maybe even see and the quills would get infected.

On one occasion the big ram of the flock had a real battle with a hedgehog and was full of quills and became infected. Uncle Nat and I caught the ram after running around the pasture several times. I held the ram while Nat pulled the quills out. Quills have barbs so when pulled they actually get ripped out. Ouch.

After removing the quills Nat rubbed the rams face with cattle salt to disinfect the area. Oh how the ram shook his head and bleated after being released. Yes, he got well and led the flock for years after and he never got "quilled" again. I guess he learned his lesson.

## **A LONG AGO ICE FISHING DERBY**

*by Richard Crane*

Years ago when I heard about one of Washington's ice fishing derbies, I just couldn't wait to take part. Back then I was much younger, with all the right equipment and had fished through the ice as far away as Newfound Lake.

Going to my favorite spot on Island Pond in Washington, I found 6-8 inches of water over the ice as it had been raining the day before. I went home and loaded my gear and decided to join the fun somehow anyway.

I got up the next morning and was back at Sandy Shore just at daylight and to my surprise the water had all gone under the ice during the night.

I loaded my sled and gear and headed for the ledges, as I looked back to shore I noticed another vehicle pull up beside my pickup but no one got out.

I set up a tip up, drilled a hole in the ice, put on the bait and lowered it into the frigid water. At about 3 feet something struck the bait and the reel began to sing. I tried to keep my back to the shore so no one would know I had a fish on. Then put the tip up back in the hole and continued to get set up.

Soon I noticed someone coming across the ice- Yes it was John, the Game Warden. He wanted to know what I had on my first line. I said I didn't know. He asked me to pull it up to see? Yes I had a big Bass. Big enough to win a prize of a nice new shiner bucket at weigh-in time at the derby. Several ice fishermen that day at Island Pond caught their limit, due to the warm water going under the ice and creating a high thermo cline.

## **HUSKING BEE**

*by Richard Crane*

The Heirloom flint corn seed for the Husking Bee has been found, thanks to the N.H. Commissioner of Agriculture and the people who responded to the articles in the N.H. Market Bulletin. It is called Roy's Calais and also Abenaki Flint Corn.

This Heirloom Corn is said to be the only New England corn to survive the infamous year without a summer, 1816. Many called this year "Eighteen Hundred and Near Froze to Death."

This corn is said to make excellent corn meal so now we are looking for someone with a grist mill or grinder to make corn meal. Let us know if you know of one.

Response to our last article about the husking bee has been slow but I'm sure more will join us as the project moves ahead.