

New home found for Glover's Mill; move is June 9

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IPSWICH - The historic 1850 mill building located on East Street will be relocated to Ipswich Historical Society property on Saturday, June 9 and the society is inviting the public to join in the celebration.

The celebration will begin at 11 a.m. at the Heard House, 54 South Main Street, at which time the truck carrying pieces of Glover's Knitting Factory will unload and store the historic structure.

According to Professor Emeritus Richard Candee of Boston University, Glover's Knitting Factory is the last remaining wood-frame knitting shop that used hand frames in America with ties to the pre-industrial days of textile production. As a result, Candee calls Glover's Knitting Factory "irreplaceable."

In Ipswich, textile production dates to the 17th century, when women spun and wove cloth, through the 18th century lace making "cottage industry," and up to the early 20th century when the Ipswich Mills produced Ipswich Hosiery. Glover's Knitting Factory, which was owned by James S. Glover, was active from about 1850 until the early 1900s, when industrialized mills took over all textile production in Ipswich.

Glover's long warp hand frame knitting machines produced shirts and drawers, stockings, frocks, scarves, and head nets. By 1870, Glover was running his operation with both handlooms and a four horsepower steam engine — the inevitable march toward industrialization.

Several months ago, the Ipswich Historical Society launched a community campaign to save Glover's Knitting Factory from destruction, and also committed its own resources to move and store the building on its property until funds are raised to resurrect it.

While not all of the necessary funds have been raised to pay for the move, the building must be removed from its present location by early June. Everyone is encouraged to contribute to the effort and add their name(s) to the growing list of enthusiastic contributors.

"The Historical Society has taken on a real challenge, but that's how strongly we feel about the history of this building and the stories it can tell about the textile industry and 19th century working



By Courtesy photo
James S. Glover Sr.

people,” said Ipswich Historical Society President Nathaniel Pulsifer. “This is one of the most important and fascinating Ipswich stories, and right now we’re not telling it.”

Sue Nelson, who is an architectural historian and chair of the Ipswich Historical Society’s Building and Grounds Committee, said “this is the first time the Historical Society has been involved in saving an important historic structure since 1968 when the Society acquired the small cordwainer’s shop that now sits on the Whipple House property.” Previously, the Society purchased the Heard House in 1936, and the Whipple house in 1898. “This makes number four,” Nelson said, “and the first of our buildings that tells the Ipswich textile history story.”

The celebration

The celebration will include the arrival of a truck with Glover’s Knitting Factory pieces, free balloons and cake, as well as punch, clam chowder, hot dogs and other refreshments for sale. There will be crafts for children, including cookie decorating, music and sing-along, speeches and celebratory remarks, and post-and-girt framing demonstration by timber framer Jim Whidden with Chris Sullivan of KCM General Contracting.

Under the supervision of Ipswich architect Mathew Cummings of Cummings Architects, Chris Sullivan of KCM Contracting will disassemble the building earlier that morning at its present location at 80 East St., Ipswich. KCM Contracting will load the building parts onto a flatbed truck and proceed to the Ipswich Historical Society’s Heard House for the 11 a.m. celebration.

Mill stories sought

In cooperation with the Ipswich Historic Commission, the Ipswich Historical Society also encourages people who have stories to tell about working in the Ipswich Mills to come forward with information, photographs, or artifacts.

“Too many of these stories are untold,” said Nelson. “The stocking industry took on national significance in the 20th century and forever changed Ipswich with the influx of mill workers from Ireland, French Canada, Poland, and Greece. We want to know more about the lives of these mill workers, and we know our neighbors have stories to tell.”

Anyone with information to share may call the Ipswich Historical Society at 978-356-2811, Bill Varrell at 978-356-4250, or Peter Lampropoulos at 978-356-7242.

To donate to the preservation of the Glover’s Knitting Factory, bring a check to the First National Bank of Ipswich on Market Street, or bring a check or call with credit card information to the Ipswich Historical Society, 54 South Main Street, Ipswich, MA 01938, 978-356-2811.