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Danish Village arch to be saved

Council wants to move only remnant to Memorial Park

By Michael Kelley
Staff Writer

A piece of land behind Big 20 Bowling Center and Tim Hortons on the corner of Route 1 and Lincoln Avenue is slated for development. The property once housed Danish Village, a popular, yet short-lived lodging establishment inspired by a village in Denmark.

The Town Council hopes to save the last standing piece of the facility, which was built in the late 1920s and went through a variety of uses over the years before being torn down by the 1970s.

The only remnants of the Danish Village are a small brick arch and a heavily damaged water fountain. Earlier this year the town's Historic Preservation Committee determined the Danish Village arch is a site worth preserving and the only salvageable piece of the once-vibrant property.

Doing so won't come easy. The Town Council voted last week to use up to \$25,000 from the Land Acquisition Reserve Fund to preserve and relocate the arch to the footpath at the corner of Memorial Park that crosses Sawyer Road and connects to the Maine Health Professional Park.

Town Manager Tom Hall said while the arch has sat untouched on the property for years, there is some urgency now because Hospice of Southern Maine has plans to use the land for a new office and hospice support services building. That would free up space and allow the organization to accommodate more individuals at its facility on Hunnewell Road.

The plan got approval from the Planning Board to do just that in July 2014. Prior to Hospice of Southern

Maine purchasing the property last year, Hannaford Bros Co. owned it.

Hall said the proposed location will provide the arch with a "prominent location as well as defining a popular entrance to the park."

Initial estimates indicate it could take \$21,186 to relocate the arch to Memorial Park (\$4,000 to move and place the arch; \$7,602 for installation of footings and backfill; \$4,000 for masonry restoration once the arch is moved; \$3,000 for roof replacement and \$658-plus for an informational kiosk and \$1,926 for contingency).

The Land Acquisition Reserve Fund was established in 2001 to "acquire real estate, or interests in real estate, in order to: a. preserve land in its natural state, or b. protect a natural resource of a historic site, or c. provide for recreational use." Over the years, the funding has been used to conserve Broadturn Farm on Broadturn Road and Benjamin Farm on Pleasant Hill Road, along with a number of land conservation projects.

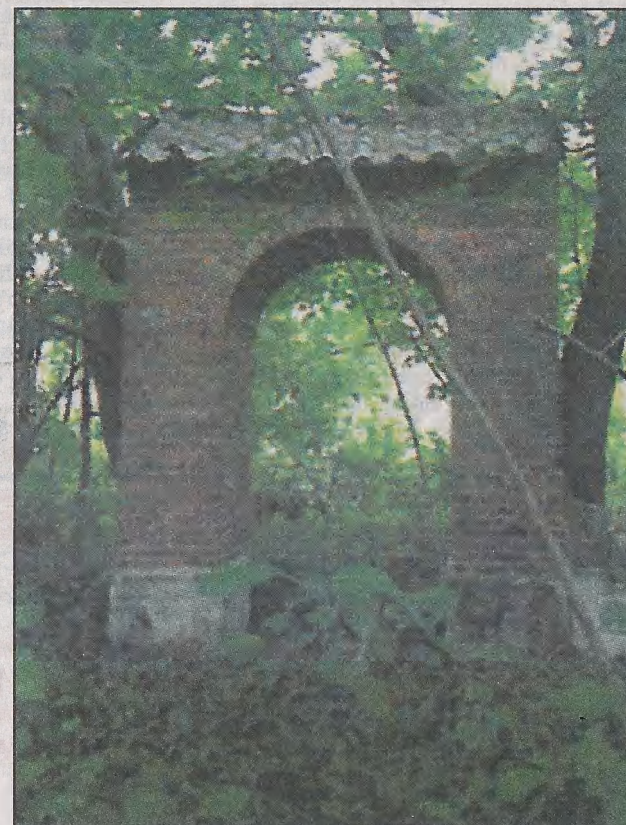
"Land bonds allow for historic preservation. It's a legitimate use of land bond funds for this purpose, Hall told members of the Town Council.

Although the property has sat vacant for years, it was quite a site for motorists passing along Route 1 back in the day.

"Once the most famous and lavish of Maine's motor courts, the Danish Village was an authentic copy of the Danish village of Rib, complete with a vast red-roofed raadhuis or town hall set on a hill overlooking the marshes," William Barry and Debra Verrier Barry wrote in "Scarborough at 350: Linking the Past to the Present."

According to Frank Hodgdon, who wrote a piece on Danish Village for the Scarborough Historical Society, "It was designed to replicate a typical antique Danish village replete with 100 cottages, no two of which were alike, clustered along four principal streets." The

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The Danish Village arch is located in a thick of woods behind Big 20 Bowling and Tim Hortons on the corner of Route 1 and Lincoln Avenue. The arch will be relocated this fall. The arch stood at the entry to a lodging complex that was built in the late 1920s and inspired by Danish architecture. (Courtesy photo)

Arch

Continued from page 1

employees, he pointed out, wore period costumes.

During the 1930s, the Barrys wrote, Danish Village “played host to the ‘better class of the motoring public’ and hosted “a state flower show, an authentic Danish wedding and an old-world pageant.” Eleanor Roosevelt reportedly stayed at Danish Village in the 1930s on her way to the Roosevelts’ summer retreat on Campobello Island, New Brunswick, Canada. In 1937, Paramount Pictures used the property for a short film on Santa Claus.

The village was made possible by Henry P. Rines, who built Portland’s Eastland Hotel (now Westin Portland Harborview) and Peter Holdensen, an architect from Boston.

In a May 1936 issue of *HighwayHost*, C.W. Giddings called Danish Village “unquestionably one of the most outstanding tourist cottage developments in the East” and offered “every luxury to be found in the best hotels, better than the average home afford.”

During World War II, Rines leased the property to the U.S. government to serve as wartime housing for workers in South Portland’s shipyards. The idea never panned out as hoped.

“The cottages, never intended for winter occupation, proved uncomfortably cold and drafty even with a newly installed steam plant, and the tenants didn’t stay long,” Hodgdon wrote.

In 1947, after fire damaged the raadhuis, the government returned the village to the Rines family.

Shortly after that, the family sold the business and Danish Village operated as a tourist camp and restaurant through the 1950s. In 1967 it was sold to Milestone Foundation, which used it as an alcohol rehabilitation



The Town Council agreed last week to relocate the old Danish Village arch to a popular walking path in Memorial Park, a short drive from the corner of Route 1 and Lincoln Avenue, where Danish Village, a popular lodging complex once stood. (Michael Kelley photo)

center until a fire again damaged the property in 1968. By 1970, all the buildings on the site were either demolished or destroyed except the raadhuis, which firefighters demolished in 1976 as part of a training exercise.

If all goes as planned, Hall said he expects work to

relocate the arch to Memorial Park to be completed by winter.

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