

# Atkinson Common Rock Tower Restoration



# Atkinson Common Rock Tower Restoration: brief history

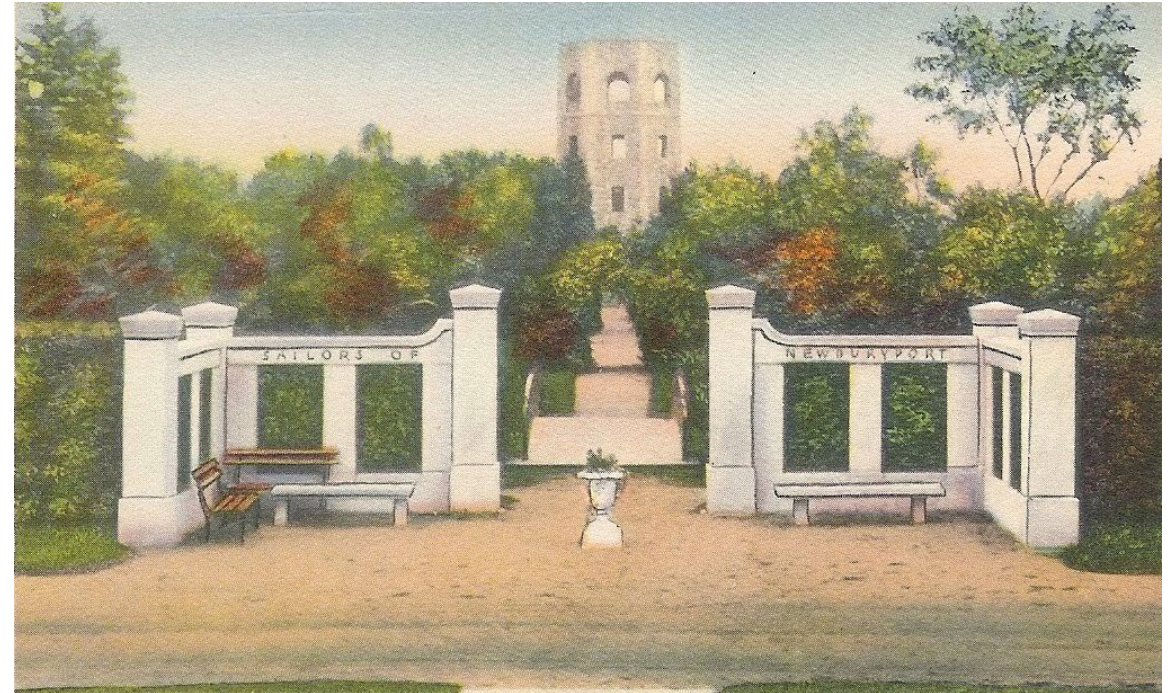
- 1873: 'field and pasture lot' donated by Eunice Atkinson Currier to the City of Newburyport
- 1894: Belleville Improvement Society lays out paths and plantings to make it a Victorian Park
- 1917: local merchant William Swasey donates wooden observation tower on the NW edge of the park (at pine alley), but it quickly falls into disrepair
- 1931: Fred Kneeland, local administrator of President Hoover's Emergency Relief & Construction Act, plans to replace tower





# Atkinson Common Rock Tower Restoration: brief history

- Tower moved to a more central location at NE end of park along central axis, and material changed to fieldstone
- 1935: President Roosevelt signs executive order establishing the Work Progress Administration (WPA)
- 1935: approval granted for construction to begin. Belleville furnishes materials, ERA provides labor of 70 men
- 1936: construction is complete and 'stately stone observation tower' stands. Total cost: \$40,000



# Atkinson Common Rock Tower Restoration: today

- 50' stone tower is in decline
- Stairs are rotting out
- Views are obstructed by trees
- No plaque to commemorate the WPA project, history shrouded in mystery
- Gates are welded shut and windows barricaded



# Atkinson Common Rock Tower Restoration: today

- Belleville has begun restoration efforts (\$100K):
  - Removal of rotting staircase
  - Installation of temporary wooden stair for construction access
  - Installation of steel beam to increase loading capacity to each floor
  - Replacement of deteriorating concrete
  - Repointing, cleaning and repair of exterior stones at base of tower



# Atkinson Common Rock Tower Restoration: scope of work

- 5 phases of restoration work remain:
  - **Phase 1: repair concrete and coat with epoxy sealer (\$59,950)**  
**\*this scope of work**
  - Phase 2: curb top level and install roof enclosure over stair to prevent water penetration (\$20-30K)
  - Phase 3: new stair and railing system to meet code (\$200K depending on design and materials selections)
  - Phase 4: clean and repoint upper exterior masonry using a lift, and remove, sandblast, paint and reinstall steel grilles and gates (\$36-42K)
  - Rebuild basement level access with a bulkhead (\$20-25K)

# Atkinson Common Rock Tower Restoration: public benefit

- Protect, preserve and restore an historical asset that is currently threatened: coating will provide long-range protection.
- The structure shrouded in mystery: accessible historical information.
- Reestablish this as an amenity for the community to access: enjoy bird's eye views.
- Supports OSRP Goal 1: 'To protect lands of public conservation and recreational interest including **Newburyport's defining scenic heritage landscapes**...and areas that support a variety of recreational activities.'
- Supports OSRP Goal 2: "To maintain and improve high quality parks and recreational areas which are safe, attractive and **provide a range of active and passive recreational opportunities** for all residents."
- Consistent with the 2017 Master Plan Goal CR-5 "To promote and support an increased level of preservation to **protect Newburyport's Historic built environment for future generations.**"



