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February 7, 2018

RECEIVED

FEB 07 2018

In Hand

Newburyport Planning Dept.

Sarah White, Chair
Historic Commission
60 Pleasant Street
Newburyport MA 01950

RE: Towle Project / Historic Signage

Dear Chair and Members of the Commission;

Reference is made to the above captioned matter. In that connection, I have attached for your review the following:

1. Historical Interpretive Sign for the "1690 House" so called which has been developed in cooperation with the Newburyport Preservation Trust.
2. Historical Interpretative Sign(s) for the Towle facility. I have attached two sign choices to discuss with the Commission. There is still some discussion with the Newburyport Preservation Trust about which of the options to use.

As an additional update, the "1690 House" so called Preservation Restriction has been recorded. The Towle Preservation Restriction has been sent to MassHistoric for review and comment.

We look forward to discussing this matter further with you on the 26th of April.

Regards,

Lisa L. Mead

Lisa Mead /lmm

cc: Client

Millis Office

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THIS 18TH CENTURY HOUSE WAS A FIXTURE OF CITY PRIDE as Towle Silversmiths' showroom and gift shop from 1966 to 1990. Towle bought the building in 1940, first renting it as employee housing. In 1965, when Towle was one bright spot in Newburyport's dimmed economy, the company decided against razing the house, instead restoring it as a showcase for Towle products, local silversmithing his-

Towle-brand flatware is still produced, and a number of patterns continue to appear on perennial "best seller" lists: "Old Colonial" (1895), "King Richard" (1932), "Candlelight" (1934), and "Old Master" (1942). The last two were designed by Harold E. Nock (employed 1916-1950), who is credited with the introduction of 29 patterns and several of Towle's many patents on silver design, production and display.

TOWLE "1690 HOUSE" (CHOATE-MORSE HOUSE)

tory, and Colonial-era interior design. Within a year of opening, the "1690 House" welcomed nearly 10,000 visitors from 49 states and 22 foreign countries.

It is necessary that [citizens] see the physical things which their forefathers left behind – their buildings, tools, furnishings and household utensils – not worn and ruined, but carefully preserved and cared for.

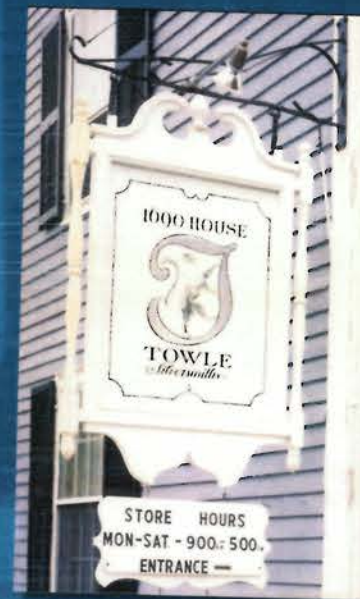
– "Towle's 1690 House Celebrates Birthday," *The Daily News of Newburyport*, April 15, 1967.

"1690 House" does not refer to the year the house was built, but to Towle's story of a silversmithing tradition dating to 1690. The building's date is often cited as 1738, which matches its structural hallmarks. But deeds suggest it was built between 1765 and 1769 by shipwright Elijah Pillsbury. The building's historical name, Benjamin Choate-William H. Morse House, refers to subsequent owners.

The building is an example of the Georgian style (1725-1780) of Colonial-era homes in New England, with entrances updated in the Greek Revival style (1825-1850). The interior contained four rooms of original Georgian- and Federal-era (1780-1830) finishes, including hand-crafted raised paneling, molding, mantels, and a Georgian staircase. All of this, remembered well by Towle employees and customers, was removed during a 2016 redevelopment.

"More than just a gift shop or showroom, the 1690 House was a place for Newburyport to display its history, its tradition, its pride of fine craft and a place where anyone could afford to own a little place at the table."

– "Walls That Talk," C. Peter Erickson, *The Daily News of Newburyport*, May 24, 2017.



TOP Towle advertisement, 1953
COURTESY OF JEAN DOYLE

LEFT Towle 1690 House Georgian staircase with raised paneling and hand-turned balusters, 2007
COURTESY OF STEVEN RUDOLPH

RIGHT 1690 House sign, from an advertising booklet, 1987
COURTESY OF THE NEWBURYPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY ARCHIVAL CENTER

BACKGROUND Towle 1690 House, 1980

THE TOWLE MANUFACTURING BUILDING WAS BUILT in 1866 by Merrimack Arms and Manufacturing Company. The building is best remembered as the home of Towle Manufacturing, also known as Towle Silversmiths, which made silver flatware and hollowware here from 1883 to 1990.

Merrimack Arms was one of several manufacturers of the Ballard rifle after the Civil War. When the operation went bankrupt in 1873, part of the building was refitted for yarn-making, and two floors were leased by A. F. Towle & Son, precursor of Towle Manufacturing. Towle was incorporated in 1880 and bought the building in 1883.

Towle began with the 1857 acquisition of the Joseph Moulton (1814-1903) silver business by apprentices Anthony F. Towle and William P. Jones. Joseph was fourth in a line of Moulton silversmiths, and the legend that generations before, William Moulton II (1664-1732) fashioned spoons from coin silver at his blacksmith shop along the Merrimack River, provided Towle with the story of a silversmithing tradition dating to 1690.

Towle flourished in good times, weathered wars and depressions, and was an innovator in sterling tableware design and marketing for 110 years.

During the busy season 1000 ounces of silver are melted each day and the company does about \$400,000 a year. About 400 workers are employed.

- Newburyport in 1887, John D. Parsons

With its tall arched windows and mansard stair tower, the 1866 Merrimack Arms-Towle Manufacturing building is an excellent example of 19th century factory design and 20th century adaptation. Towle expanded the building between 1886 and 1947, and removed the main mansard roof about 1910. The last of Towle's local management prevented the building's demolition, selling it in 1997 for conversion to office use.



TOWLE MANUFACTURING BUILDING

By 1940, Towle produced 28 flatware patterns. "Marie Louise" (1939) became the official silver pattern for U.S. embassies worldwide. During World War II most of the factory was turned over to military production. In 1948, with a rush of post-war silver orders, Towle employed 1,000 people.

By 1977, Towle was the nation's second-largest manufacturer of sterling tableware, but the next year was absorbed by the Leonard Silver Co. In 1989 the reconstituted company filed for bankruptcy, and Newburyport operations closed in 1990. Since then Towle's design assets have been held by a succession of silver industry conglomerates.

In 1914, Towle began paying dividends to its shareholders, an economic hallmark it would continue, uninterrupted, for more than 60 years.



LEFT Towle employees showcase silver and magazines advertising "Old Lace" (1939) pattern FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF THE MUSEUM OF OLD NEWBURY

MIDDLE Towle silversmiths at work, 1951 postcard, donated by Marge & Skip Motes FROM THE COLLECTIONS OF THE MUSEUM OF OLD NEWBURY

RIGHT 1888 Towle Manufacturing receipt COURTESY OF THE NEWBURYPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY ARCHIVAL CENTER

BOTTOM Towle "Marie Louise" (1939) pattern

BACKGROUND Towle Building with original mansard roof, circa 1905 postcard COURTESY OF THE NEWBURYPORT PUBLIC LIBRARY ARCHIVAL CENTER

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NO DISCOUNT ON THIS BILL.

FRANK ALLEY

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Towle's Factory, Newburyport, Mass.

Made in Germany for G. H. Parsons, Newburyport, Mass.

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Marie Louise®
A delicate traditional design, Marie Louise was introduced in 1939. It combines the unusual effect of smooth sides with the subtle touch of delicate decoration.

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