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HERITAGE TOURISM SPARKS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The National Trust for Historic Preservation defines heritage tourism as “traveling to experience the places, artifacts, and activities that authentically represent the stories and people of the past and present.”

Social media and other forms of communications on 21st century devices can be a less than satisfying experience for true history lovers. Photographs, anecdotal stories and scholarly research, old maps, and other records including art works, are poor substitutes to an authentic visitor experience. People are willing to travel to far flung places, and increasingly more so these days. The public from wherever they hail want to “feel” places as witnesses to history.

Inherent to the mission of all preservation and living history groups is the promotion of heritage tourism with programs that provide unique opportunities to engage the public, near and far, to time-travel into the past.

Incorporated in 1664, Dartmouth is a coastal community with a rich history and a proud historic legacy going back thousands of years. Above and below ground, cultural resources informed by research—from pre-contact periods with thriving Indigenous peoples to colonial and

post-colonial settlements—provide rich content for storytelling.

The town's special character, natural resources, coastline, built and stone structures, attract visitors who are enriched by the experience. In turn, the community is gifted with ambassadors for preservation and protection who share a historic legacy that is passed on to future generations.

The Dartmouth Heritage Preservation Trust (DHPT) is well-positioned to operate in a heritage tourism space.

As the stewards Cultural Heritage Center and Education Facility, DHPT offers verifiable detail about Dartmouth's early inhabitants and progeny to bring this historic house into sharp focus. By so doing, this organization shines a spotlight on the town and region's history.

Why is the Akin House different from other house museums? The 1762 Akin House is a rare representation of an extant Georgian Cape farmstead with a center-chimney post and beam construction.

Built two years into the reign of King George III, its status today as a "study house" and witness site to the American Revolution is a unique heritage landmark for Dartmouth.

As immigrants from Scotland, the new world offered opportunity and a new destiny. The Akin clan's entrepreneurial spirit showed a fierce determination to

move away from a dependent relationship with the British Crown, regardless of horrific political upheaval. Along with other founding families, the Akins switched their allegiance from the King to the “Common Cause,” an independency largely for economic independence and self-realization, and ultimately in pursuit of self-government.

Shipbuilding and the Revolution brought about privateering to fund the war and allegedly the Akin brothers, James (1706-1804) and Elihu (1720-1794), were in that fight and in it to win it.

Dartmouth settlers eventually created a flourishing economy with diverse industries including farming and fishing, tanneries and taverns, mills of every type, marine manufacturing and artisanal businesses, shipbuilding and coastal trading. The British Raid of September 1778 on the Apponagansett River would soon change their fortunes.

And as Joseph Bagley, Chief Archaeologist of the City of Boston, so often states, “it’s not about the stuff, it’s the story.” DHPT is true to its motto, “The Little House with a Big Story to Tell.”