

Anna Wynn

From: Elizabeth Burdick
Sent: Wednesday, September 11, 2024 3:24 PM
To: Anna Wynn
Subject: FW: Letter from the Ledyard Historic District Commission regarding Proposed Destruction of Mt. Decatur

Anna, Please add the below email as an exhibit for the record. TY.

Regards,
Liz Burdick
Director of Land Use & Planning
Town of Ledyard
741 Colonel Ledyard Highway, Ledyard, CT 06339
Telephone: (860) 464-3215 ~ Email: planner@ledyardct.org TOWN HALL HOURS: MON-THURS, 7:30AM – 4:45PM

-----Original Message-----

From: Doug Kelley <dbkelley12@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, September 11, 2024 2:48 PM
To: Elizabeth Burdick <planner@ledyardct.org>
Cc: Earl (Ty) Lamb <tylamb5350@outlook.com>; Bill Barnes <iambarnes@gmail.com>; Ken Geer <kengeer1@gmail.com>; Kelly Lamb <kellylamb3113@gmail.com>; Vincent Godino <vdgodino@snet.net>; galesferrydistrict@gmail.com; catherine.osten@cga.ct.gov
Subject: Letter from the Ledyard Historic District Commission regarding Proposed Destruction of Mt. Decatur

>> Inasmuch as it is within the purview of the Ledyard Historic District Commission to review, seek counsel, and advise upon proposals to change physical features, structures, and elements of the town of Ledyard which have lasting historical significance, we, said Commission, do agree and advise that the hill and promontory abutting Gales Ferry village to the north on the Thames, known as Mount Decatur, should be preserved and protected in its entirety.

>>

>> Mt. Decatur may hardly be worthy of the name "mountain," but its significance in the War of 1812 and to the survival of the United States Navy is quite large. When Commodore Stephen Decatur was bottled up in the Thames in June, 1813 with his ships, he fortified the rise then known as Allyn's Hill, stretched a chain across the river to impede British passage to Norwich, and quartered his sailors and troops on and around the hill, including in Gales Ferry village just below, taking a cottage for the duration which still exists. Decatur's actions here in our own environs prevented the investiture of the interior of New England. While small, his salvage of any portion of the nation's fleet meant it could become the nucleus of a rebuilt postwar force.

>>

>> For many years after Decatur's departure, even as the remnants of its use fell into decay, local citizens would visit the site. An annual picnic was held in the late years of the 19th and early 20th centuries, and a large boulder was inscribed to commemorate the importance of this vantage point as it was evident that time and nature was taking its course. For all of this, even the place name records this critical point in local and national history, and shadows of the wartime use of the land remain. We can assume that any concerted, organized survey of the site would result in findings and physical artifacts which would enhance our knowledge of this period of history. Given the area's longtime association with the United States Navy, the value this site has - even in its unimproved state - cannot be ignored.

>> To be clear, we concur with the view of those who fought to preserve the entire landscape which is the setting of the battlefields at Gettysburg and in Northern Virginia. It is critical for physical context to survive in order for these nationally significant events to be fully understood.

>>

>> As well as the Commission's concern for Mt. Decatur itself, we must question how its physical removal would affect Gales Ferry village, immediately adjoining. Comprising two separate recognized historic districts, the bounds of Gales Ferry village contain some 64 18th and 19th century, and 20 early 20th century structures - primarily residences - and 7 civic/community structures, which are built upon masonry foundations and which largely have masonry chimneys, used as much for venting furnaces as for fireplaces. Having some experience of such removal and blasting on a much smaller scale at Baldwin Hill, it is inconceivable to us that blasting such a large quantity of granite over such a period as it would take to effect such removal would not damage these foundations and chimneys, as well as others of note in the vicinity.

>>

>> We especially direct attention to Ledyard's Zoning Regulations 11.3.4.D that "no adverse effect would result to the... historic features of the immediate neighborhood," and 11.3.4.E, that "the character of the immediate neighborhood would be preserved in terms of scale, density, intensity of use, existing historic/natural assets/features and architectural design." How the blasting away of the chief topographical feature along the shore of the Thames within our town cannot be excused by use of these regulations is to us self-evident.

>>

>> The proposed removal of the greater portion of Mt. Decatur would be a loss to not only our small town and the State of Connecticut, but indeed to the Nation. We have found to our extreme regret that, once any landmark - whether built or topographical - is lost, that loss is permanent and without remedy, and future generations will look for signs of it to no avail, and the same shall look askance at we who do not do our utmost to prevent it.

>>

>> Respectfully,

>>

>> Ledyard Historic District Commission

>

>>

>> Sent from my iPhone