

## MOVING HISTORY

### Historic House, Formerly One Of The Three Sisters, Saved From Demolition

Story and photos by Tim Wood

CHATHAM – As the large truck crept slowly along Champlain Road, Gwyn Brittigan didn't see a 250-year-old building, partially covered by a tarp, perched precariously on the flatbed. She saw her new home.

"I just love old houses," she said as workmen scrambled to trim branches and lift wires out of the way of the historic house.

It took most of the afternoon last Wednesday to get the house from 181 Champlain Rd., near the curve at Stage Harbor, to its new home on Sears Road about a third of a mile away. There it was gently placed on a new foundation by contractor Sylvester Building Movers and Excavators. Brittigan and her husband Eric plan to renovate the home and add a small addition, keeping it as historically accurate as possible.

The move comes at a time when preserving historical homes is getting more and more difficult, despite such tools as the town's 18-month demolition delay bylaw.

"It's a significant save for the town," Historical Commission Chairman Frank Messina said of the move. The commission had placed the house under a demolition delay back in 2015. He lauded the Brittigans, builder Rick Roy and John and Tanya Lund, owners of the property where the house sat since its construction in about 1762, for their patience and willingness to work their plans through the town's bureaucracy even after the delay had expired.

The house previously sat on a rise overlooking Stage Harbor and was known as one of the Three Sisters, three homes along the water that served as a landmark for mariners. It was the oldest of the three. The house to the west, owned by Margaret and Crossen Seybolt, was built in about 1795. The house in the middle, owned by the Lunds, was built in the 1940s. It took the place of the 1762 house and a new

The couple also plan an addition which will include a family room and modern kitchen.

As evidence of the smoothness of the move, Gwyn said a bird had built a nest inside a tarp that was placed over the section of the house where the old ell was removed. The morning of the move, she saw the mother bird ducking behind the tarp to feed the baby birds in the nest. She worried that the mother would lose track of the nest after the move.

But Thursday morning, after hearing the baby birds chirping, Gwyn saw the mother go behind the tarp to feed them.

The move "might have been stressful for the baby birds, but not for us," she said.

Email Tim Wood at [twood@capecodchronicle.com](mailto:twood@capecodchronicle.com)



The historic home, previously one of the Three Sisters overlooking Stage Harbor, crept along Champlain Road to its new home on Sears Road.

home is being built in the center, preserving, in appearance at least, the Three Sisters.

The process of getting approvals to move the house and relocate it on property Brittigan's family owns at Sears and Battlefield roads was "really difficult," Messina said. It required multiple hearings and permits, including a zoning variance because there was already a house on the lot. Under the town's zoning bylaw, one house must be a main house and be twice the size of the second house, considered the guest house. Because of the size of the existing house on the lot, the Brittigans would have had to expand the newly placed house much more than they planned. This is a case, they said, where they had to ask permission to build a smaller structure.

Gwyn Brittigan has spent summers in Chatham her entire life. The property where the relocated house was placed was purchased by her grandfather, Wallace Marden, in the 1930s. Several other houses on the property are occupied by her father, uncles and other family members. Moving homes is nothing new to them, according to her uncle Jay Marden. Family members, including Gwyn's grandfather, had previously moved houses in the Hingham area.

The Brittigans, who live in a 100-year-old home in Annapolis, Md., began the process of acquiring and moving the house a year and a half ago. They said they were lucky to connect with Roy, who shared their vision of preserving the old Cape.

"Any other builder probably would have walked away a long time ago," Gwyn said.

They plan to renovate the interior of the home and retain as much of the original elements as possible, including the original floorboards; they weren't able to save the chimney, so that and the fireplace will have to be rebuilt. A newer ell was removed from the building, but a garage which had been attached to the 1940s house next door was also moved and will be attached to the house.



A garage salvaged from one of the other Three Sisters homes, a 1940 Cape, was also moved and will be attached to the 1762 house at its new site.



Gwyn and Eric Brittigans in front of the 1762 house they moved from Champlain Road to Sears Road.

---

Thursday, 06/08/2017 Pag.05

Copyright © 2017 Cape Cod Chronicle, Inc. 6/8/2017