

Nantucket Preservation Trust Announces 2024 Award Winners

Rita Carr • Sep 15, 2024

The Nantucket Preservation Trust has announced the winners of its annual Preservation Awards for 2024. The annual awards recognize individuals and/or organizations that advance the cause of historic preservation on the island. In general, the NPT Preservation Awards emphasize proper preservation, showcase the island's craftspeople, and reveal the foresight of owners who care about Nantucket's historic structures and landscape. The program is designed to show that a building or landscape can be sensitively updated while maintaining and preserving its historic integrity.

The Michelle Elzay Architectural Preservation Award: Leslie Mayer, 14 Broadway, Siasconset





Leslie Mayer, 14 Broadway, Siasconset, winner of the 2024 Michelle Elzay Architectural Preservation Award.

Since taking ownership of The Maples at 14 Broadway in 2011, Leslie Mayer has cherished the 200+-year history of her home situated between Broadway and Center Street in 'Sconset. The roses that adorn her historic home have appeared in numerous publications and are a favorite of visitors and residents alike.

Under Leslie's stewardship, The Maples underwent a meticulous five-year restoration project that was completed in 2024. There were no changes to the historic building's footprint, exterior roofs and walls, or its interior plan of rooms. Leslie ensured The Maples' eighteenth-century plaster walls and ceilings, hand-planed wood floors, hardware and windows were all retained and restored.

The original T-plan of bedrooms with its adjoining den displays wood door hinges on single-plank-width wood doors, door mouldings, fireplace paneling, and newly discovered ceiling joists with period moulding were all retained. The kitchen and bathrooms were sensitively updated within the existing footprint. The lofted Crow's Nest and Haulover highlight the evolution of the house, with references to character-defining details and craftsmanship. Leslie Mayer and her home at 14 Broadway exemplify the best of restoration and preservation practices.

John A. and Catherine Lodge Stewardship Award: Frances Karttunen, 67 North Centre Street





Fran Karttunen has made immeasurable contributions to the study of history on Nantucket. After a celebrated career as a linguist and professor at the University of Texas at Austin, Fran returned home to Nantucket in retirement with her late husband, the historian Alfred W. Crosby. A 12th generation Nantucketer, much of Fran's work on the island has been dedicated to uncovering the history of Nantucket's immigrant communities. Her 2005 book, *The Other Islanders: People Who Pulled Nantucket's Oars*, is the culmination of this important research.

Fran has been the steward of her family's home on 67 North Centre Street since 1994. For many years it was known as the Sylvaro Homestead. In 1867, Enos Sylvaro purchased the c. 1730 dwelling from Aaron Swain. Enos and his wife Ellen raised six children there. Ferdinand, Emerson, and Lizzie Sylvaro inherited the house, and Lizzie, following the death of her husband Edgar Ramsdell, raised her daughter Ellen at 67 North Centre Street.

Family and neighborhood local tradition holds that the 1.75 story lean-to style dwelling was originally built out of town in the 1730s and moved to its present location sometime before 1830. Its post and beam construction is visible in the main first floor rooms, and underneath the stairs a hatch opens down to a circular cellar.

In addition to her stewardship of 67 North Centre, Fran has published scholarship on Nantucket history, been a longtime member of the Nantucket Cemetery Commission and has been a longtime contributor to programming at the African Meeting House, the Saltmarsh Center, and Our Island Home.

Historical Renovation Award: Michele Kolb, 27 North Liberty Street





In August 2023, architect Michele Kolb purchased the Seth Ray cooperage (c. 1798), a contributing structure abutting the Lily Pond. 27 North Liberty Street was in need of repair and restoration. Prior Nantucket Historic District Commission approval for the site would have allowed a second-floor addition, rear and side additions, removal of all the historic windows, and the demolition of all historic interiors.

Under Michele's ownership, new plans for a historical renovation were filed with the Historic District Commission with the goal of retaining as much of the existing historic fabric as possible. Late-19th century were retained and restored, as was the original post and beam structure. Two small additions were added, a rear bathroom over what had been an existing shed and a single-story side addition for a bathroom and laundry.

Much of the focus of the work was to retain, restore, and rescue the historic fabric of the building. Windows were removed, restored, reglazed, and reinstalled with new pulleys, ropes, and counterweights. Floors were restored and refinished. New services, mechanical, electrical, and plumbing were installed. All existing doors and hardware were retained, refinished, and reinstalled. Where needed, salvaged doors were used to match existing ones.

The work was completed in just nine months under Michele's leadership. This past summer renters enjoyed experiencing historic Nantucket without sparing modern conveniences.

Traditional Building Methods Award: Aaron Beck, Blacksmith





Originally a carpenter from Martha's Vineyard, Blacksmith Aaron Beck is the sole proprietor of Handwrought Tools on Deer Isle, Maine. Aaron was trained through a series of apprenticeships in Montana, Wisconsin, and Mississippi. His work is informed by his appreciation for traditional trades, and his background in history and fine carpentry.

Aaron has completed numerous projects on Nantucket, including handrails, gate hardware, and hinges at private homes. Some of Aaron's most striking work includes the front stoop reproduction curved handrail at 86 Main Street (2019 winner of NPT's Michelle Elzay Architectural Preservation Award) and handrails at the South Church on Orange Street.

Michael Gault, NPT's 2023 Traditional Building Methods Awards winner, writes in his nomination for Aaron's work: "Aaron has a deep understanding of traditional methods because that's what lasts the longest. His tools encourage the owner to slow down, think about what you are doing, and forget everything else but the task at hand. Blacksmithing is a way to shake hands with the past, present and future."

Caroline A. Ellis Landscape & Garden Award: Nantucket Garden Club, Saltmarsh Senior Center Garden, 81 Washington Street





The Saltmarsh Senior Center is a hub of community life for many Nantucket seniors. In recent years, its garden had become overgrown and choked with invasive plants. Starting in early 2022, members of the Nantucket Garden Club led by Paulette Boling undertook the creation of a coastal resilient native plant garden to transform the 1,200 square foot space. The project was not for the faint of heart: its coastal location adjacent to Nantucket harbor is flooded with seawater multiple times per year, hard to remove invasives were well established, and many rabbits liked to snack on new plantings. Paulette and her team of Garden Club members planted the site with native perennials and grasses including American beachgrass, little bluestem, sweet fern, bee balm, milkweeds, asters, and many more. These species are low maintenance and well adapted to Nantucket's climate and sandy soils and can tolerate both dry and wet conditions. An interpretive sign at the site shares with the public how once established, these native species do not require pesticides, watering, or fertilizers and support wildlife and pollinators.

The garden has become a cherished oasis along the busy Washington Street corridor for island seniors, Saltmarsh Center staff and volunteers, and anyone who passes by.

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