

# Preservation group continues work to save Bath High School



Restoration work continues on the former Bath High School, built circa 1920. (Contributed Photo)

Special to the Daily News. In July, the old Bath High School building reached another milestone in its journey to be restored, as workers began to tear away the 1966 kitchen addition to the circa-1920 buildings.

Unlike the main structure, the addition offered no historic architectural significance. The kitchen removal was the latest step in Bath High School Preservation's effort to oversee the school's renovation.

The three main brick buildings that comprise the structure of the former high school were constructed between 1918 and 1921, with the first classes attending in 1921. The last graduating class was in 1989. Sections of the school were used until 2007, but the original building was left empty. Efforts to encourage new uses for the buildings by commercial developers proved fruitless. Over the years, the shuttered building deteriorated and became an eyesore.

The school complex is easily the largest structure in what is considered Bath's main business district. It's also adjacent to the visitor's center at the Bath State Historic Site, and it is just a block away from the town's historic Main Street.

In addition to its prime location, the building has potential because the complex is one of two early 20<sup>th</sup> century masonry buildings in the largely Colonial-era Bath Historic District, part of the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2005, the Beaufort County Board of Education decided to demolish the school. It was then the nonprofit BHSP was formed and members persuaded the school board to give ownership of the building to the town so it could decide how to handle the property.

BHSP procured an individual listing on the National Register of Historic Places for the school. As the restorations continue, BHSP is in talks with the town to purchase the three adjacent buildings, built circa 1921, to better position the structures for grant funding.

"We will work together to be good stewards and neighbors on this historic property," said Peggy Daw, BHSP president. "We hope to have customizable space available for lease in (at least one) wing within the next two years. The strategic planning is under way. We urge local contractors who would like to assist in this development stage to contact us, and we recommend that everyone take time to see what has been completed to this point and join us (as BHSP members)."

Membership information and details of upcoming events may be found at the BHSP Web site, [www.bhspreservation.org](http://www.bhspreservation.org).

BHSP continues to raise funds for the success of the restoration, including a Sept. 12 auction at the Ormond Amphitheater. The event is free and open to the public, with many items and services available for auction. All proceeds will go toward the restoration of the school.

<http://wdnweb.com/content/e-edition/2009/08/16/A3.pdf>