

MCGLASHAN-NICKERSON HOUSE

CALAIS

The Story

During the nineteenth century Red Beach was a thriving Calais community built around the now-defunct Maine Red Granite Company and the Red Beach Plaster Company. A survivor of that heyday is the McGlashan-Nickerson House, constructed in 1883 by Scottish immigrant George G.



McGlashan. Acquired shortly thereafter by Calais Justice Samuel H. Nickerson, the rambling two-story Italianate house sports a long ell extending to a carriage barn. The house sits on six acres and is among the largest and most architecturally significant houses in Red Beach and is the only one of Italianate style. It shares a long drive with and the 1854 Gothic Revival Joshua Pettegrove House, one of only a few houses in the state set in a landscape designed by Andrew Jackson Downing, the founder of American landscape architecture. These houses are both individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places and form the southern boundary of the village running upriver to the north. Just downriver, adjoining the McGlashan-Nickerson House property, sits the visitor's center for the St. Croix International Historic Site, owned by the National Park Service but located well to the east on an island in the St. Croix River.

The Threat

In 2000 the National Park Service (NPS) acquired and rehabilitated the McGlashan-Nickerson property to house a variety of administrative functions. In 2013 NPS began exploring alternate uses for the property as, after building a new visitor's center to the south, it no longer needed the house. Sadly, NPS had already stopped painting and repairing the historic residence abdicating its mission to maintain the property. Maine Preservation is surprised that in the just-released Draft Environmental Assessment, the National Park Service stated its preference to dispose of the house WITHOUT the underlying property, requiring any bidder to move the structure. If no bidder willing to initiate a move comes forward, which NPS acknowledges is likely, the Park Service will demolish the house.

The Solution

For two years Maine Preservation has offered and continues to offer to work with the National Park Service in partnership with the Maine Historic Preservation Commission to find a new owner for the McGlashan-Nickerson House who will stabilize and rehabilitate the house and agree to manage the six acres of land that goes with the house in a manner compatible with the adjoining visitor center. For the National Park Service, as the federal agency responsible for our national parks, monuments and all other properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places as well as for the protection of the historic integrity of these places, to demolish this National-Register listed historic house violates its own mission.