

Nahant pumps new life into historical building

By Thor Jourgensen / The Daily Item | Posted: Monday, November 2, 2015 3:00 am

NAHANT — The Nahant Life Saving Station is getting a partial facelift befitting its status as one of the town’s most visible buildings and a link to its sea-going past.

Before winter sets in, workers for Lincoln-based contractor Gerard O’Doherty will finish constructing two new wooden staircases on the building’s front and the station’s gravel parking lot will be completed.

Nahant Preservation Trust President Emily Potts said Gerard O’Doherty started the work this month, extending the firm’s long involvement in the station’s renovation and preservation. Grant money combined with \$95,000 approved by Town Meeting last spring provided \$155,000 to pay for the stair construction, exposed stone aggregate walkways, the parking lot work and creating a seagrass erosion barrier against storm-driven seawater.

“We’ve wanted to do that work for a long time,” Potts said.

Built in 1900, according to the trust’s website, the big white building on Nahant Road with its companion garage once housed rescue boats. In the event of a marine disaster, crews hoisted up two large doors and rushed the boats into the surf.

Eight lives lost during an 1898 ship-sinking led to the life saving station’s construction. Deeded from the federal government to the town in 2000, according to the trust website, the station fell into neglect recalled by Gerard O’Doherty worker Jason Conlon.

The firm started renovating the station almost 10 years ago using its workers’ historical preservation skills to bring the big building up to code and save its century-old architectural features.

“We’ve had our hands in almost every little project here,” Conlon said.

Potts said the station is an increasingly popular town site for meetings and events, including last Friday’s Council on Aging luncheon. Mortimer G. Robbins American Legion Post 215 members meet in the station and Potts said the station’s “boat room” is a sought-after event location.



Matthew Greenleaf

Matthew Greenleaf rebuilds the front steps of the Nahant Life Saving Station, one of the many big improvements at the station.

“We’re seeing quite an upswing in the number of community groups that use it,” she said.

Conlon took advantage of last Friday’s good weather to saw and fit planks into the station’s two new staircases.

“You’re saving history and bringing it back. You’ve got to put a lot of pride into it,” he said.