Work begun on the Guilford Country Store's Reconstruction on Dec.21, 2011! The store owners, the non-profit Friends Of Algiers Village, Inc. (FOAVI), are now seeing direct results of what they have been aiming at for the past 2 1/2 years. Local firms will perform the work: Scott Mathes of Guilford, and Gabriel Helme of Brattleboro, were the successful bidders to be the General Contractors . These contractors have experience with building and renovating post and beam buildings-a real plus. Plumbing/heating will be done by Mark Garland of Guilford and the electrical wiring by Victor Johnson of Guilford. The FOAVI Board of Directors was delighted to have these local men do the work with Garland and Johnson having worked on the building numerous times in the past; hence they bring a great deal of knowledge of the building's idiosyncrasies to their work. Suffice it to say that the Broad Brook House, which contains the store area, has over the last 194 years had all kinds of changes to its structure. It is expected that FOAVI will benefit greatly by having these local Guilford contractors. They will perform the work under the direction of the owner's agent, Chris Cole of Manchester, VT.

During the summer months the members of the FOAVI Store Project Committee rolled up their sleeves at work bees and removed virtually all of the store's interior furnishings. Some of these went into storage and some went to junk dealers. Professional crews had to be hired to remove the asbestos tiles and the lead paint. Most of the government and grant requirements were cleared up and plans to begin the store's interior reconstruction readied.

The work will now be done over the winter months. The first steps will be to remove all of the store's walls, ceiling, and floor. When this is accomplished, reconstruction of a modern store area will occur with everything meeting Vermont's contemporary standards for safety and health. A sprinkler system will be installed for fire protection. Fortuitously, the Town of Guilford has received a grant to bring a public water main from Brattleboro into the Algiers Village in the spring of 2012 and the Broad Brook House will connect up with this. An energy audit recommended by Efficiency Vermont has been performed and this will guide the installation of new insulation. An energy efficient propane furnace was installed last winter, adding to a far more efficient heating system for the building.

The Broad Brook House, as previously reported, has been placed on the National Register For Historic Places. One of FOAVI's commitments under this has been to maintain wherever feasible the historic elements of the building. One such example has been to keep the original Rumford fireplace in the store area where patrons will sit to have their coffee and snacks. It was with much surprise that removal of plaster of an adjourning wall revealed a second Rumford fireplace attached to the rear side of the first one- a fact hitherto unknown to anyone. It is quite possible that other historic features will be uncovered as the work proceeds and they, too, will be preserved.

The FOAVI is planning another fund drive for early 2012 with the goal of completing the renovations and preparing the space for a store operation. Concurrently with the fund drive, the search for an operator to lease and operate the store will continue.

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