

Susan B. Anthony Birthplace and Museum Opens

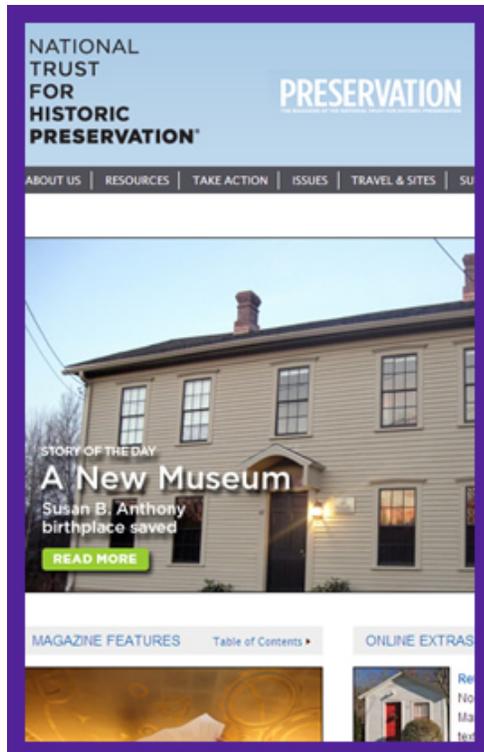
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By: Lauren Mayer, *Preservation Magazine*

The Susan B. Anthony Birthplace & Museum, North Adams, Mass.

Cautious, careful people, always casting about to preserve their reputation and social standing,

never can bring about a reform. Those who are really in earnest must be willing to be anything or nothing in the world's estimation, and publicly and privately, in season and out, avow their sympathy with despised and persecuted ideas and their advocates, and bear the consequences. —Susan B. Anthony



Susan B. Anthony spent her first six years in an 1818 farmhouse in North Adams, Mass. By 2006, that two-story house had been vacant for 11 years, and both its roof and foundation needed emergency repairs. Hoping to resuscitate the house as a museum, Rochester, N.Y., resident Carol Crossed bought it at auction for \$164,500. Now restored, the National Register-listed house is scheduled to open in May as the Susan B. Anthony Birthplace and Museum.

"It was a long time coming," says Crossed, owner of the museum and president of its board.

"The town has always wanted to make this a national shrine because it deserves to be."

The project cost almost \$800,000, including the acquisition of the house, Crossed says.

The goal of the restoration, which began about two years ago, was to return the farmhouse to its original state—with a small store on the ground floor and a residence on the top floor.

"The house had been occupied as a private residence for its entire life, and as a result had undergone change after change," says Jim Leitch, senior designer at Westall Architects, based in Williamstown, Mass., who oversaw the restoration. "The first thing we had to do was peel back those layers to find the original layers of the building."

On Feb. 14, about 60 people attended the museum's ribbon-cutting ceremony, held to commemorate Anthony's 190th birthday.

"People were excited, absolutely excited, especially those people who had been in the building before the project began," says Leitch, who attended the event. "It really was a dramatic transformation."

Anthony's home in Rochester, N.Y., a National Historic Landmark, has been open as a museum since 1945. In 2002, it received a Save America's Treasures grant toward its restoration.