



Commander's Mansion

440 Talcott Ave | Watertown | Massachusetts | 02472
www.commandersmansion.com

2026-2027 Guidebook



Contents

History	1
About, Features & Inclusivity	5
Weekend Pricing	7
Weekday Pricing	9
Studio Pricing	10
Customizations	11
Considerations	13
Catering Requirements	15
Contact	16



History

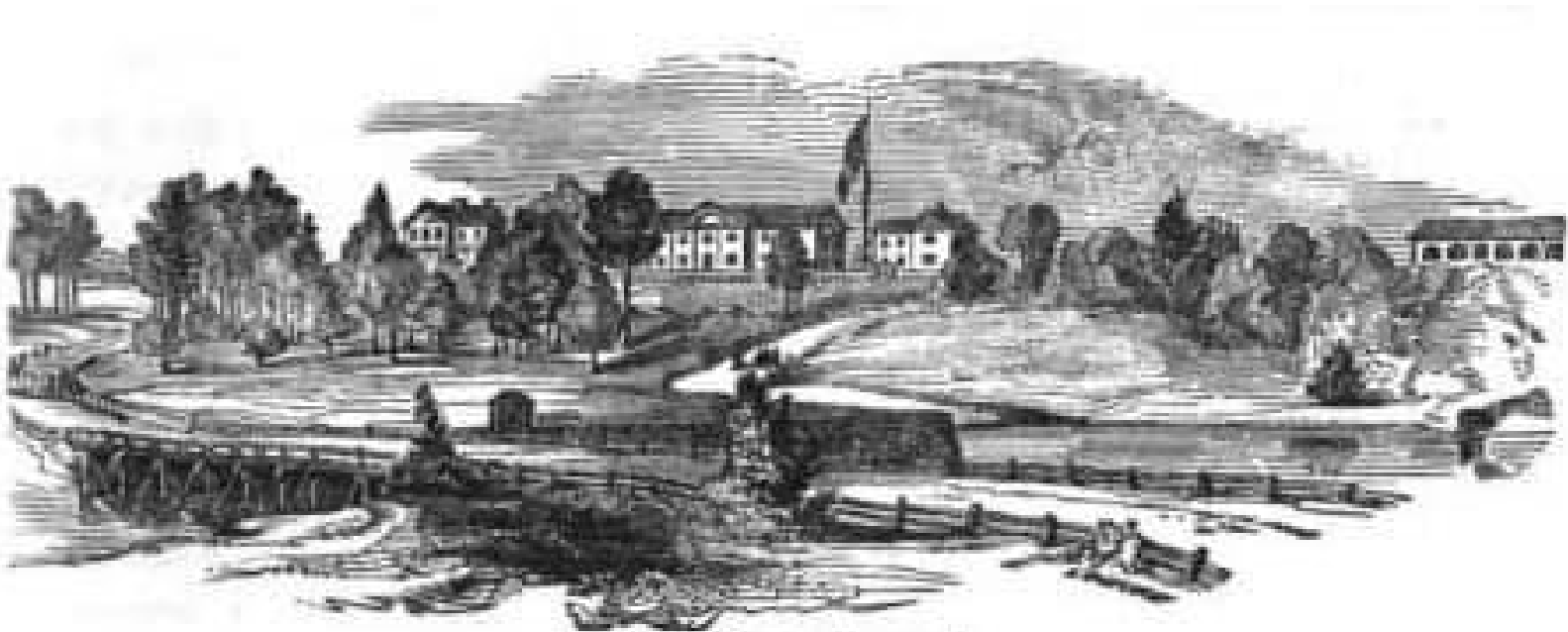
Shortly after the Civil War, certain events that occurred at the Watertown Arsenal were brought to the attention of the Congressional Committee on the conduct of the war. The controversy centered around the alleged disloyalty and mismanagement of the Arsenal by commanding officer Thomas J. Rodman. Among the allegations against Rodman were the charges that he had “neglected to join official-ly in the observance of expression of joy at the surrender of the rebel General Lee, and of the sorrow at the death of President Lincoln.” He was also accused of employing disloyal men; of interfering with the right to petition by refusing to allow female employees to circulate a petition in the laboratory and after-wards discharging 19 of them for doing so; of retaining an employee who had twice been found under the influence of liquor; of employing 57 foreigners (thought to be less loyal) out of 98 enlisted men; and of excessive spending in the building of the new commanding officer’s quarters.

More than 90 witnesses were examined by Honorable Mr. Gooch of the Congressional Committee, who appears to have carefully selected for testimony those persons who advocated Rodman’s removal; and to have asked leading questions to any witnesses who may have been in sympathy with the commanding officer. Rodman himself was not allowed to participate in the cross-examination of the witnesses; and was able only to refute the charges in a letter sent to Brig. Gen. A.B. Dyer, Chief of Ordnance. He protested that he had given much attention to the loyalty of his men, and he showed his vigilance in pointing out that there had been no accidents at the Arsenal during his tenure there. He further explained that he had

not fired a salute in recognition of the end of the war and of the President's death because he never received official orders to do so.

Major Rodman also attempted to meet the charges that he was having new quarters constructed which were considered extravagant for a commanding officer of the time. Opponents of the new quarters estimated that the costs would be as high as \$100,000 to \$150,000, and that Rodman was seeking to build the house for his own benefit. The commanding officer countered their claims by stating that he had been ordered to build the new quarters by the Ordnance Department, which had sent plans and specification for them. He argued that every economy possible was being observed in constructing the house, and other witnesses supported him by estimating that the total costs would be less than \$60,000.

The total cost, in fact, was \$63,478.65. Although that figure was half of what some critics had estimated, in 1865 such a sum could only produce a rather magnificent dwelling. The Commanding Officer's Quarters, the Commander's Mansion, is still today one of the highlights of the Watertown Arsenal area, and remains virtually unaltered after more than 100 years of housing commanding officers and their families. The three-story brick Bracketed style mansion, approached by way of tree-lined Talcott Avenue (originally known as Main Avenue) possesses irregular silhouette characteristics of the period. A Victorian veranda surrounds part of the house and supporting the porch roof are delicate single and paired Corinthian cast-iron columns from which spring arches of lace-like ironwork are intertwined. Paneled brick pilasters place emphasis at the corners and a series of brackets support the heavy cornice.



United States Arsenal

Watertown Arsenal
by William Guild
1865

The plan of the main portion of the house is built around a central large hall which provided access to the principal rooms. The interior is richly ornamented with heavy moldings, ceiling medallions, and marble fireplaces. The abundant use of fine woods also enhances the decorative program. Among the building materials ordered in 1865 were large amounts of cedar, chestnut, black walnut, butternut and spruce, many of which were used in the beautiful polychromatic hardwood floors in the main portion of the house.

The evolution of the plan and design of the house was an involved one. The first set of plans was rejected by Rodman, who had his draughtsman, George W. Horn of Watertown, incorporate certain changes in the arrangement. After some of these changes were accepted in Washington, a revised set of plans was submitted to Rodman. According to Horn, when Major Dyer was promoted to Ordnance Chief, Rodman received consent to build quarters like those in Springfield. Dyer also suggested the addition of an ell, and later the height of the rooms in the main story was raised in the first floor from 12 to 13 feet and in the second story from 11 to 12 feet. This necessitated the making of an entirely new set of plans and elevations by Horn, and a continuation of letters passing between Watertown and Washington.

The master mason of the Commanding Officer's Quarters was Captain Thomas L. French (1809-1890), a Watertown leader and employee of the Arsenal for over 25 years. French was by trade a mason and builder in Holliston and Watertown, where he "did a large and lucrative business." He was also very active in Watertown town affairs, serving as a selectman for 15 years and holding other minor town offices. Solon Whitney's history is 1890 credits French with having built most of the large buildings at the Arsenal during the Civil War. Specifically which buildings they were is unknown.

French, Horn and stonecutter J. William O'Donnell all testified that they felt the costs incurred in building the new quarters would fall within reasonable expenditures. Also in response to the one-sided testimony taken by Gooch, a plethora of affidavits was sent to Washington attesting to the commanding officer's character and administrative ability. The citizens of Watertown voted in their own town meetings to petition for Rodman's continuance in command and stated: "His integrity and uprightness, his loyalty and devotion to the government, his enthusiasm in the profession he pursues, his his great business ability, his skill and accuracy as a mechanic, his energy and efficiency as a public officer, and his great industry and untiring devotion to his duties are characteristics that of the most influential citizens of the vicinity," expressed their strong support of Major Rodman and demanded that he receive a fair hearing.

The exact outcome of the charges made against Rodman is not known. Records show, however, that in July, 1865, after the interrogations had been completed, Rodman left the Watertown Arsenal for Rock Island, Illinois, where he supervised much of the planning and construction of the new arsenal there. In spite of the allegations made at Watertown, he continued his distinguished career and was made a Brevet Brigadier General. Later known as the "Father of Rock Island Arsenal," Rodman was buried at Rock Island National Cemetery on June 7, 1871.

The estate was placed on the National Registry of Historic Places January 30, 1976.





Daniel Nystedt Photography

About us

We can accommodate up to 200 guests throughout the Mansion and our seven acre property. We can host up to 175 guests indoors throughout both floors or 200 guests under the tent. Our tent is up seasonally from May through October.

Our lush green terrain includes a beautiful Grape Arbor for onsite ceremonies, as well as options of the an East, West and North Lawns for cocktail hour. The Talcott and Rodman suites are located on the second floor {each with an en suite bath} are your private spaces to gather and get ready before your guests arrive.

Features

Free onsite parking for guests | Central AC and heating | Handicap accessibility | Wifi
Two private changing rooms with private en-suite restrooms | Three additional restrooms

Inclusivity

The Commander's Mansion welcomes all love. We are a LGBTQUIA+ friendly venue.



Weekend Rental

Peak Season

May 1st *through* October 31st

-
- 9 hour rental: 2.5 hours of vendor set up, 5 hours of event time, and 1.5 hour of breakdown
 - exclusive use of mansion & property
 - indoor use tables & chairs
 - fabric lined 40' x 80' reception tent with general illumination over brick pavers
 - 15' x 45' catering tent with general illumination

Fridays	8,500	for 9 Hrs (\$500 for each additional hour)
Saturdays	\$10,000	for 9 Hrs (\$500 for each additional hour)
Sundays	\$8,500	for 9 Hrs (\$500 for each additional hour)
Sundays & Mondays (of Holiday Weekends)	\$10,000	for 9 Hrs (\$500 for each additional hour)

Off- Peak Season

November 1st *through* April 30th

-
- 9 hour rental: 2.5 hours of vendor set up, 5 hours of event time, and 1.5 hour of breakdown
 - exclusive use of mansion & property
 - indoor use tables & chairs

Fridays	\$5,500	for 9 Hrs (\$500 for each additional hour)
Saturdays	\$6,500	for 9 Hrs (\$500 for each additional hour)
Sundays	\$5,500	for 9 Hrs (\$500 for each additional hour)
Sunday & Mondays (of Holiday Weekends)	\$6,500	for 9 Hrs (\$500 for each additional hour)



Weekday Rental

Jan 1st *through* Dec 31st

- Rental timeframe must be inclusive of vendor set up, event time, and vendor breakdown.
- Exclusive use of mansion only.
- Indoor use tables & chairs.
- Tent may be rented in addition to week day mansion rentals. Optional tent rental includes:
 - fabric lined 40' x 80' reception tent with general illumination over brick pavers
 - 15' x 45' catering tent with general illumination

Mondays *through* Thursdays

\$500 Per Hour

Weekday Tent Rental

\$3,000 May *through* October only





Studio Rental

Jan 1st *through* Dec 31st

Filming

Rental n l u e

- 9 hour rental: includes set up, filming and breakdown
- exclusive use of mansion only
- indoor use tables & chairs
- Tent may be rented in addition to week day mansion rentals. Please inquire for rental rates.

Mondays *through* Thursdays only \$1,700 for Hrs (\$500 for each additional hour)



Photoshoots

Rental n l u e

- 1 hour rental • exterior use only

Mondays *through* Thursdays only \$100 for 1 Hr



Customizations

Bistro Lighting - Tent

Bistro Lighting - East Lawn Trees Bistro

Lighting - Arbor

Crystal Chandeliers

White Paper Lanterns

Lit Grapevine Spheres

Color Changing Uplights

White drape for poles & entrances Luxury

Restroom Trailer - 2 Stall Luxury Restroom

Trailer- 3 Stall, ADA Compliant



Considerations

DO YOU ONLY HOST WEDDINGS?

We love weddings but we also host a variety of events including corporate meetings and retreats, galas, concerts and memorials. Please note in an effort to preserve our historic estate, we no longer host childrens or young adult events including but not limited to Sweet 16's, Bar/Bat Mitzvah's, 21st birthdays, proms and graduation parties. Thank you for your understanding.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN THE RENTAL?

Your Peak Season rental includes exclusive use of the Mansion, gardens, one 15' X 45' catering tent, and one fabric lined 80' X 40' 3-pole reception tent over brick pavers with general illumination controlled by dimmers. The tent has access to ample power for all your entertainment needs. Your Off-Peak Season rental includes exclusive use of the Mansion and the grounds. Regardless of season, your rental includes use of our indoor-only tables and chairs.

IS THE MANSION AIR CONDITIONED? IS THE TENT AIR CONDITIONED? IS THE TENT HEATED?

The Mansion is air conditioned. There is an option to rent heating for the tent in cooler months. The tent is not air conditioned but fans may be rented to cool the space.

CAN I TENT MY WINTER EVENT?

Our tent is up seasonally May through October only.

DOES THE CM PROVIDE CATERING? CAN I BRING IN MY OWN CATERER?

We do not have in-house catering. All caterers must be approved to work on site. We are happy to provide a list of recommended caterers with extensive experience working events at our venue. Cakes/desserts may be brought in from an outside bakery, but must have a licensed kitchen.

HOW MANY GUESTS CAN I HAVE?

Our capacity for the entire property is 200 guests. We can seat this comfortably under our tent with dinner and dancing. For indoor capacity options please see page 9.

CAN I D.I.Y. MY OWN DJ/FLORALS/CAKE/ETC?

We do not permit any "do it yourself" vendor replacements. All vendors must be insured professionals that are able to provide a certificate of insurance upon request.

CAN MY DOG WALK ME DOWN THE AISLE?

Absolutely! We do ask that they not enter the Mansion but allow your furry friends to participate in the outdoor ceremony and formal photos and then have your pet-sitter to bring them home.

IF THE MINIMUM RENTAL IS 9 HOURS, HOW IS THAT BROKEN DOWN?

The 9 hour Mansion rental is broken down into 3 hours of catering set up before guests arrive, 5 hours of event time and 1 hour of catering breakdown. The minimum rental is 9 hours, usage of less than 9 hours will still be billed at the minimum fee.



Continued...

HOW LATE CAN MY PARTY END?

Rental timeframes must end no later than midnight, which means guests may stay no later than 11 PM.

DOES THE MANSION TEAM ACT AS A WEDDING PLANNER FOR US?

The Mansion will have a representative on site through the duration of your rental. Our responsibility is to upholding the policies, safety and security of the venue and to ensure a smooth event for all guests. Clients are welcome to hire their own event planner as a vendor to help facilitate their event and fulfill logistical needs.

HOW DOES THE ALCOHOL WORK AT THE MANSION?

We have a maximum pour time of 5 consecutive hours, the latest the bar can close is 1 :30 PM. We do not permit shots, shooters or self-service alcohol. Alcohol must be brought in and out by a licensed provider.

IS THERE A PLACE FOR ME TO GET READY? ARE THERE SLEEPING ACCOMMODATIONS?

We have two private changing suites on the second floor of the Mansion for your use. Each has a sitting room and private bath. Please note we do not have any overnight accommodations but would be happy to recommend local hotels.

HOW MANY REST ROOMS ARE ON SITE?

There are five gender-inclusive restrooms on site: three on the first floor and two in the private suites on the second floor. We also have an option to add a luxury outdoor restroom trailer. Details upon request.

CAN WE HAVE OUR REHEARSAL AT THE MANSION?

Due to a busy schedule of events, we are unable to accommodate rehearsals.

ARE WE ALLOWED TO SMOKE ON SITE?

We are a non-smoking venue. Thank you for your cooperation.

Catering Requirements

Caterers must be approved to work at the Commander's Mansion for each event, regardless of past status. To be approved, the caterer must meet all the requirements listed below. Commander's Mansion staff will notify both the caterer and client within seven (7) business days of receipt of the completed application and the required initial meeting of the status of their application. Caterers must submit a completed application *at least* six months prior to events with a nine hour rental window and no later than two months in advance of all other events.

Catering Service Fee

A catering service fee of \$500.00 paid by the caterer will apply for each catered event.

The catering service fee is due at the final scheduled walk-through appointment with the client.

Requirements

Caterers must meet the following requirements to be approved:

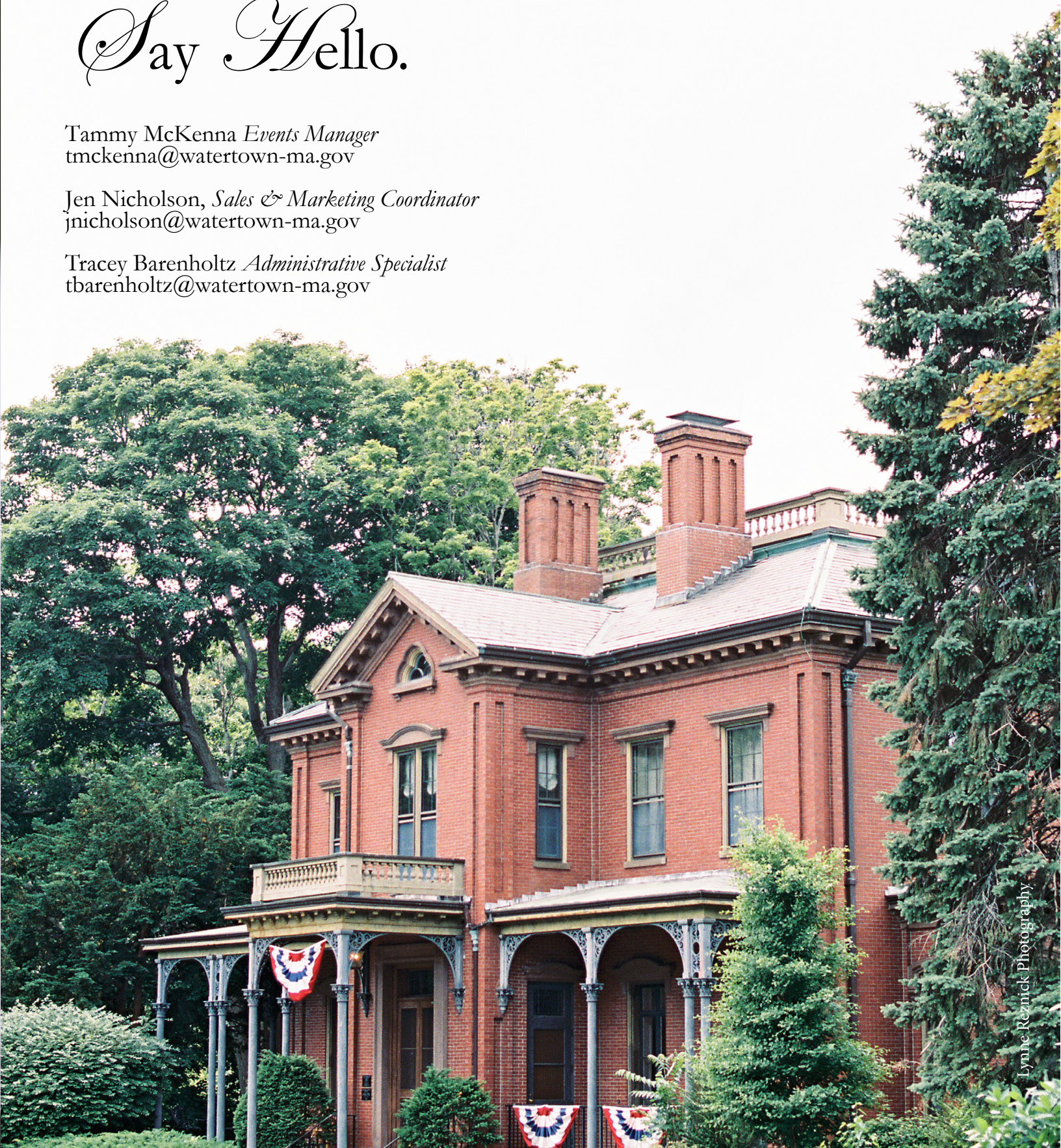
- Be in business as providing private catering services for a minimum of three years
- Carry a minimum of \$500,000 in insurance liability and have a current Certificate of Insurance on file with CM
- Hold an active 12C license
- Schedule an initial meeting during the application review process and attend the final scheduled walk-through at the venue with the client (the initial meeting may be waived by management if caterer has recent work experience on site)
- Adhere to all Commander's Mansion policies (for a full list of policies and event application to complete, please contact our Sales and Marketing Coordinator at jnicholson@watertown-ma.gov)

Say Hello.

Tammy McKenna *Events Manager*
tmckenna@watertown-ma.gov



Jen Nicholson, *Sales & Marketing Coordinator*
jnicholson@watertown-ma.gov

Tracey Barenholtz *Administrative Specialist*
tbarenholtz@watertown-ma.gov



Lynne Reznick Photography

440 Talcott Ave Watertown, MA 02472
p. 617.926.7755 | www.commandersmansion.com

 @commanders.mansion |  @commandersmansion