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Houghton-Sprague House: Massachusetts Historical Commission Application

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FORM B - BUILDING

assessor's #
25-37

usgs quad
Ayer

area
Outlying

Massachusetts Historical Commission
80 Boylston Street
Boston MA 02116

form # 77

Town Harvard
Place Outlying
Address 204 West Bare Hill R

Historic Name:
Ralph Houghton House

Use Present farm
Original farm

Date of construction: 17th ce

Source reverse

Style colonial

Form central chimney

Architect N/A

Exterior Material:

Wall/Trim wood

Roof asphalt

Foundation stone

Outbuildings barns plus
See rear of form for more
detailed description

Alterations shed wing
See rear of form for more
detailed description.

Condition good

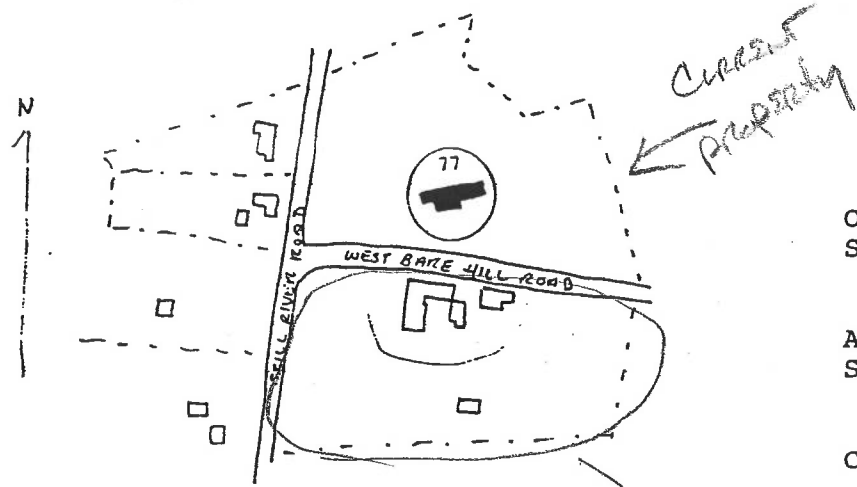
Moved no

Acreage ~~4.35~~ 2.75 acres

Setting rural
See rear of form for
detailed description



Sketch Map



Recorded by: Claire W. Dempsey

Organization: Harvard Historical
Commission

Date: May 1993

LAND SOLD OFF

by THE SONS to be previous owners -
THE old barn was torn down + A New House and
WELL barn was built - !! WHAT A LOSS -

BUILDING FORM

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Ralph Houghton House is Harvard's oldest extant structure, dating to 1685. The farm's 4.35 acres line Still River Road, the property is bisected by West Bare Hill Road (which runs on an east/west axis). The farmhouse is located on the north side of West Bare Hill, while the barn and various out buildings stand on the opposite side of this road. The two-story clapboarded house fronts onto a broad lawn, the side and rear agricultural fields currently lie fallow. This center chimney house represents a transitional phase between Post-Medieval and Georgian architectural forms. As is characteristic of late-17th century frame structures, the hall and parlor plan was augmented by an integrated lean-to which housed a rear kitchen, buttery, and small chamber. The building measures five bays in width and two piles in depth. While exhibiting greater symmetry than an early residence, this fenestration does not yet adhere to the standard proportions of Georgian architecture. The chimney and entry are slightly off-center. Later additions include a single-story shed roofed ell (which extends from the left lateral wall) and a pedimented entry porch. Window treatment consists of six over six sash in the main house, and eight over twelve sash in the ell. The farm's two-story New England barn has clapboard siding on its gable front and vertical siding along its lateral wall. A single-story gabled ell with carriage bays projects from the barn's left lateral wall. A cinderblock garage stands to the west of the barn, its overhead door is located in a canted corner. The garage also takes a gable block form and is lit with industrial sash windows. This east/west progression of outbuildings culminates with a late 19th century shingle-sided carriage house with large sliding doors.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

This late-17th century structure was constructed by either James Houghton or his father Ralph. This section of Harvard was one of the town's earliest areas of English settlement. According to Nourse, this house served as a garrison. The property passed to James' third son, Thomas and his wife Mariah Moore. Thomas' namesake inherited the property and passed it in the early 19th century to his son Cyrus. Cyrus served as a commissioned officer, rising from ensign in 1797 to lieutenant in 1798. He married Sarah Gates on April 4, 1799. The property remained in Cyrus' name until the 1870s. It passed to his son, Edward Warren Houghton, in the late 19th century.

REFERENCES

- Anderson, *Directions of a Town*, 1976.
- Nourse, *History of Harvard*, 1894.
- Essays on Common Area by Sawyer (1952) and Hersey (1936).
- Notes of Scourgie, HHS.
- Holman Map of 1831, Beers Atlas of 1870, Richardson Atlas of 1898.

x Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. See NR Criteria Statement form.

[NOT LISTED]

Massachusetts Historical Commission
80 Boylston Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Community
Harvard
Area

Property Address
204 West Bare Hill Road
Form # 77

National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

NOMINATED,
NOT LISTED

Check all that apply:

Individually eligible.

Contributing to a potential district.

Eligible only in a historic district.

Potential historic district.

Criteria: A B C D

Criteria Considerations: A B C D E F G

Statement of Significance by Claire W. Dempsey.

The Ralph Houghton House is believed to be the oldest house in Harvard, Massachusetts. Dating to the last years of the 17th century, it is located near the village of Still River, in the portion of the town that was first settled. The house is an example of a first period house that has been expanded over the years, and retains a significant surrounding of farm acreage, occupied by the same family for generations. The Houghton House meets criteria A and C at the local level. It retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Date