

Roger Williams University

DOCS@RWU

Documentation

Bakerville: Anne Baker's Letter to Elizabeth Marcus with Room Descriptions and History

Follow this and additional works at: https://docs.rwu.edu/baker_documentation



Part of the [Historic Preservation and Conservation Commons](#)

By 1967 Bob and I had been living on a boat for 4 years, and with 2 kids growing older, we knew it was time to get off the water and find a house. Bob had grown up in Westport so we looked there first and to our delight discovered a wonderful old house with 65 acres, for sale by John Sousa ,the owner. However there was a hitch; a farmer, Ted Duponte, had made an offer before us and was waiting for a Farm Loan (which we felt he would get) so we offered him a "deal." We would buy the whole 65 acres, move the house to the half that was wooded (about 32 acres) and lease him the barns and cleared land. (the only part he really wanted) with an option to own that portion when his payments were complete. He agreed.

It's hard to believe that in 1967 the price we paid for 65 acres, water frontage, a house and barns was \$58,000 — and that, I remember thinking, was a lot of money! Duponte paid us 30,00 plus interest for his half and I shutter when I think what Pimental could get today.

THE ORIGINAL SITE.

The house faced south, as it does now, and its location was exactly where Duponte built his house (presently owned by Jose Pimental.)

The Tripp grave yard is located on Pimental's north boundary wall about 200 yards from Drift Rd. It is enclosed by a stone wall.

During the preparation for moving the house we discovered a large deposit of iron slag under the chimney, a definite indication that something (perhaps a forge) had been on that site in the 17th century and before the house.

In July of '67 we moved the house across the field to its present location.

Before moving it we knocked off a 20th century vestibule from the NE corner of D room.

RESTORATION - First Floor

Room A

This room was pretty much in tact but had many coats of white paint which I

removed.

The chimney breast was so thick with paint that I had no idea that there were sliding glass panels. As I removed the paint I realized something was behind the panels and, much to my surprise, when I pulled — out they came and no glass was broken.

Room B

The front door came from a salvage yard and the hinges were given to us by Tom Benson. They had belonged to his father, John Howard Benson, a famous stonemason and calligrapher from Newport, Rhode Island. The beaded joists match the beaded joists in F.

The wall sheathing came from a ceiling in a house in West Greenwich R.I.

Two balusters were missing. Tony Millham made us the new ones. (Try figuring out which ones they are!)

Inside the door, half way up the stairs, you can see on the door frame the marks of 17th century butterfly hinges.

Behind the door to the cellar are the back side of feather boards either originally part of room C or reused from another part of the house as backing for the paneled wall.

Living Room - C

The fireplace was bricked up and plastered over. On removing the plaster, etc., we found a fireplace with an oven on the side. Behind that fireplace we found a much larger one with a beehive oven located in the back. However the actually oven part had been removed, probably when the closet in room A was built.

The north check of this largest and oldest fireplace had been removed when the later one had been built, but we found a definite mark on the hearth of the check location and that's what we used as a guide to rebuild it.

When we first removed the sheetrock, from the area around the fireplace, we found pieces of the original chimney breast used for the wall construction, and in the attic we found one of the original panels reused as a floor board. The remaining panel came from our collection.

In the SE corner there were marks that showed there had been a corner cupboard, but when we acquired the house the cupboard had been removed and a closet installed. We removing the closet and found bits of the corner cupboard reused for the closet construction. The corner cupboard that is now there came from George Considine. He told us it had been in a house at Barney's Joy, South. Dartmouth, Massachusetts.

In 1965 The Sousa's replaced the old floor with narrow oak boards. We removed them and installed the present wide board floor.

The entire ceiling had been covered with cardboard. Under the cardboard we discovered that the plaster laths had come un-fastened and the ceiling close to collapsing. It was a very old ceiling and worth saving so we jacked it up and screwed the lath back to the joists. (I'm almost afraid to ask how its doing)

Room D

This had been the Souza's kitchen. We turned into a library and installed a stairway. The stairway came from a house in South Kingston, R.I. Biscuit City Rd. (The old lady's house!) The S shaped balusters are typical of those found in 17th century R. I. houses.

The plumbing for the 2nd floor bathroom is hidden behind the shelves and heating pipes are hidden behind a fake corner post in the SE corner.

Room E

This was the Sousa's bathroom and the only one in the house. We planned to keep it as a bathroom until we discovered feather boards and an originally exposed ceiling under plaster. It became an office!

Kitchen - F and G

To enlarged the kitchen we removed the original partition between G and F.

The fireplace had been sealed, plastered over and its chimney breast removed. Fortunately we had rescued a chimney breast from a house on Pine Hill Rd., Westport, that fit its opening but it was a bit short and is the reason for the wide board at the top. (When we found the chimney breast it had been entirely plastered over (in an effort to hide it) which is why there are strip marks on the upper panel and the lower panel hacked back.

A stairway, for access to a second floor apartment, had been installed at the west end of **F**. We removed the stairway and replaced the joists. (The two joists that don't have a bead.) The remaining ceiling had been covered with cardboard but under it we found the beaded joists which are original and unusual.

The shelves and cupboards on the wall between **F** and **H** were built from parts and pieces we had collected from other houses.

The floors had been covered with plywood —hence all the nail holes.

The feather-board door, from the kitchen into the ell, came from another house.

The kitchen cupboards (sink area) came from the Howland House at Round Hill, S.Dartmouth,Massachusetts (Hetty Greene's house on The Colonel Green Estate) We moved the Howland House to Newport R.I. for the NRF. (Present location - 20 Bridge St, Newport)

The cupboard over the stove also came from the house on Pine Hill Rd.

Room H-K

The hard pine, shadow-molded boards on the wall of the stairway are 17th century and very rare. We found them through out the house. They had been cut up and used as patches. Because of their short lengths this was the only place they would fit.

SECOND FLOOR Rooms **L** - **S**

Room L

We installed the closet and found its door in the Sousa's barn where it was being used to keep calves from getting out..

Room N

The fireplace was plastered over and in the NW corner there was a closet. Next to the closet was a door that led into the present bathroom (**P**). We found a few odd feather boards behind the plaster on the fireplace wall and decided to complete that wall in featherboards using ones from our own collection. The beams had never been cased or the ceiling plastered and only junk boards laid

across the joists for an attic floor.

Room O and P

This area was the Sousa's apartment kitchen.

The interior window shutter came from a house belonging to my family in Wakefield R.I. known as the Dockrary House. At some point the corner of the shutter had been cut off so the shutter could be reused as a partition under a roof. Hence the reason for the patch.

Attic T and U

Most of the history of the changes to the house can be found in the attic. You probably already know that the house was not originally a center chimney structure. If not look at the floor plans and you will see that there are double posts between **B** and **C** and **F** and **E**.and that the partition in the attic lines up with them. Double postilng is a clear indication that one side or the other came first.

Following are some thoughts as to what might have happened:

On the east side of the attic partition **U** there is a clear mark of an earlier roof line, and if you look carefully you will see the marks of an earlier window frame around the opening of the present partition door. (Also, at the top of the ladder, leading to the roof, you will find the reused pieces of that window frame framing the opening to the roof.) What does that tell you? Perhaps that lower roof line on the east side of the partition was raised to match the one at the west end, the window removed and the space became a doorway.. Of course that only tells you that the east side of the attic partition was once an outside wall— BUT still doesn't tell you which side came first.

The rafters on the west side (**T**) of the partition are scarfed at the top and obviously reuse (possibility from the earlier roof over the east end) or the carpenter made a big boo-boo when he measured..

However just to make it more confusing the collars in **T** were originally 17th century rafters. On top of them are the marks left from notches that were used to hold the purlins for tying thatch. (If you don't want to get on a ladder to see them, look at the bottom of the collar on the east end, behind the chimney, and you can see the marks. (It is the only collar that has the marks facing down..)

The shadowed-molded door in the partition wall has 17th century butterfly hinges and wooden string latch. The shadow molding matches the shadow-molding on the stairway boards in I. Both the door and the boards had originally been part of the same room — either in the east side or reused from some where else.

It appears, at first thinking, that the west end came first followed by a story and half addition (east side roof line on partition wall in attic) but the fact that the big fireplace (with oven in the back) is part of that structure makes me think that side was built first as a one and a half story building. Then the west side was added and at some point the east side was removed (except the fireplace) and a full two story addition built to match the west end. However If that's so where did the 17th century collars and the rafters that had to be scarfed, come from? Possibility a house down the road? And worse still— if the east side came first the double posting should be in room A as the framing for the original house should included the large fireplace.

If you ever have an architectural historian looking around tell him that the framing method for the roof overhang is different at each end and also that we did look under the beam casings through out the house and found that the timbers were never made to be exposed. They were rough and did not have a chamfer.

The deed only indicates that the house was there in 1721. But there are enough suspicious parts that make me wonder if parts of it were much earlier. Of course if you take the house down you might get the answers!!!

I know the attic story is all very confusing so back to stuff that's easy.

There are steel rods inserted in the attic between the joists - north to south. The joists were pulling out of their pockets so this was done to keep them from slipping out any further.

General

All the doors on the first floor, plus their hardware, were scattered throughout the house. Some were stored in the attic and some reused on the second floor.

I removed all the paint from the woodwork through out the house but when I got to the door between the kitchen and dinning room I stopped. It was too beautiful just the way it was. Otherwise all the paint used was Latex.

The exterior walls are planked with vertical oak boards (instead of studs). The

shingles are applied directly on the planking as is the foam insulation on the inside. The insulation is 1" thick ridged foam (R factor of 4.) Plaster was applied directly on the insulation. This method insured that the interior framing stayed visible as it always had been. Between the floors is blown in insulation

The interior walls are wide board, one inch thick. The electric wires in the walls are incased in metal Wire Mold.

We rebuilt the chimney from the attic up and sealed the remaining walls with plaster..

Fortunately, over many years, people did not ripped out a lot of the original details - they just did their best to cover them up.

EXTERIOR

The house was covered with asbestos shingles over wood shingles. When removing the wood shingles we found one that had "Shingled August 1882" written on its back. During re-shingling we found marks of two other additions on the north wall. One where the present ell is and the other on the wall between rooms O and P (Drawing inclosed)

The windows were one-over-one which we replaced with 12 over 12 etc.
For what it's worth:

During the 50's the Sousa's sold gravel off their land. One of the gravel operators opened up an Indian site at the east edge of the field across from the gable end of the house. Another time a skull was found and determined to be that of a murdered man who had lived in the house.

When Duponte was close to his final payment we were in a better financial position and did everything possible to try and convince him to sell the land back — but to no avail. However I did manage to get a first refusal and 6 years or so later he came by and told me he was ready to sell. However the price had skyrocketed and sadly was way beyond my reach.

It took Bob and I four years to complete the house, shed and slaughter house. Then came the shop, its ell, the barn and finally the Cole house.

OUTBUILDINGS

Bob moved the ell, on wheels, from Fisher Rd, Dartmouth (just before Woodcock Rd).to Robbins Lane at Westport Point in 1950 where he used it as a workshop. We then moved it again,on wheels, to 670 to use as the ell on the house. However we missed measured and it was short by 2 feet — hence the stairway.

The small shed was dismantled and moved from Brick-kiln Lane, Hanover, Mass. It had been an outbuilding belonging to Alden Briggs, a shipbuilder on the North River during the 1700's.

The "slaughter house," just north of the shed, came from Cranston, R.I. We were hired by the NRF to dismantle it. Later they decided they didn't want it and we bought it from them for a \$1.00! The lean-to was added later..

The Barn was dismantled and moved from Chapatcht, R.I. I added the rear extension.

The Boat shop (present apartment) was dismantled and moved from S. Dartmouth.

The Ell on the shop was made from lots of left over pieces hanging around.

The House in the woods (Cole), circa 1690, was located at 915 Warren Ave., East Providence. It had been moved to that site but I was never able to find out from were. It had been through many changes, including the removal of the original end chimney, but the 17th century frame was all there. It was slated for demolition so I bought it for \$7000.00, dismantled and moved it to 670 Drift Rd. in 1977.. Only the original frame was re-erected. It has an exposed oak frame with vertical planking. The corner posts are splayed and the summer has a plain chamfer with lambs tongue and double V-checks. It runs perpendicular to the fire box. These details show that it has historical architectural significance.

History of The Main house

"Located on the east side of the road, west of the Noquochoke River about a mile and a half north of Hix Bridge."
Built by James Tripp circa 1721.

1712 Land laid out to James Tripp

- 1721 James Tripp to John Tripp "where I now dwell"
1742 John Tripp* to James Tripp
1744 James Tripp to William White, Jr.
1816 Jonathan White to Reuben Waite
1874 Henry Waite to Thomas Preese
1903 Thomas Preese to Napoleon Deschamp
Napoleon Deschamp to ?
1930 ? to John Sousa
1967 John Sousa to Robert H. and Anne W. Baker
1954 Anne Baker to E. Marcus

(Enclosed is a copy of the survey done by Ben Crane in 1712)

*It is said that John Goddard (famous furniture maker) was born in this house.
His mother was Mary Tripp daughter of John.