

Historic Structures Report

Nathaniel Parsons House

58 Bridge St.
Northampton, MA



Prepared for
Historic Northampton
46 Bridge Street,
Northampton, MA

Prepared by
Myron O. Stachiw
April 2026

Acknowledgements

The Historic Structures Report for Historic Northampton's Parsons House was quite a remarkable and rewarding project. I would first of all like to express my gratitude for and appreciation of the directors and staff of Historic Northampton for their unwavering support, encouragement, and collaboration in this project of discovery, not to mention their great patience throughout the project for our interpretive conclusions. They sought historical knowledge about the history and evolution of the house based on solid documentary and archaeological evidence, and we have done our best to provide Historic Northampton with that knowledge.

An important goal of the project was to place the house in a broader social, economic, and material context. I am grateful to my colleagues in this project for the deep knowledge and experience they brought to this project which contributed towards that goal: dendrochronologists and architectural historians William A. Flynt and Eric Gradoia; paint conservators Christine Thomson and Kirsten Travers; timber framer and architectural historian Nevan Carling; and structural engineer Elizabeth Acly.

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Introduction

The recent investigation of the Nathaniel Parsons House, the results of which are presented in the following report, was undertaken 33 years after the completion of the pioneering building archaeology study of the Parsons house carried out by investigators from the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) Conservation Center in 1992¹. That study was undertaken to confirm or correct the long-held belief of family descendants that the house was erected for Cornet Joseph Parsons (1620-1683) soon after he was granted a house lot in Northampton in 1654 or 1655. The Northampton Historical Society (NHS) acquired the house in 1941 by bequest from a family descendant, and the building was operated as a historic house museum, presented as the house of Cornet Joseph Parsons by the NHS.

The NHS was reorganized as Historic Northampton (HN) in 1989. New research on the history of the Parsons family and their property carried out in the late 1980s and early 1990s, in part related to the preparation of a new genealogical volume of the Parsons family², and a new interpretation of early New England architecture by Dr. Abbott Lowell Cummings, questioned the mid 17th century date of the house, and prompted HN to commission the SPNEA investigation.³

The 1992 investigation combined paint investigation with controlled and carefully documented archaeological removal of exterior and interior building fabric to explore the various phases of construction and alteration of the house through the 18th and 19th centuries. Their archaeological methods led them to the conclusion that the house was not erected until the late 1720s or early 1730s, and underwent several phases of significant enlargement and remodeling in the mid 18th century, in the late 18th- to early 19th century, and again during the second quarter of the 19th century. Based on these findings, the SPNEA team recommended an innovative interpretation and exhibition plan for the house which revealed and explained the various architectural changes made to the house in the context of changing esthetics and technology. That plan was never realized for a variety of reasons; instead, several rooms in the building were outfitted to serve as gallery space, and other rooms were given over to storage of HN's growing collection of historic artifacts.

In 2003 William A. Flynt conducted the first dendrochronology sampling and dating of timbers in the house as part of his project to create a regional master chronology of pitch pine trees. Flynt sampled a number of accessible framing members in the attic of the house identified as being part of the earliest portion of the house. He discovered that the timbers came from trees felled between 1716 and 1718. Given the New England tradition of erecting a building's frame in the spring following the winter felling of the trees, his findings revealed that the oldest section

¹ Gregory Clancy, John Leeke, "Report on Building Archaeology at the Nathaniel Parsons House", 1992, Mss., Historic Northampton.

² Gerald James Parsons, *The Parsons Family, Volume One: The English Ancestry and Descendants to the Sixth Generation of Cornet Joseph Parsons (1620-1683)*, Gateway Press, Inc.: Baltimore, Maryland, 2002.

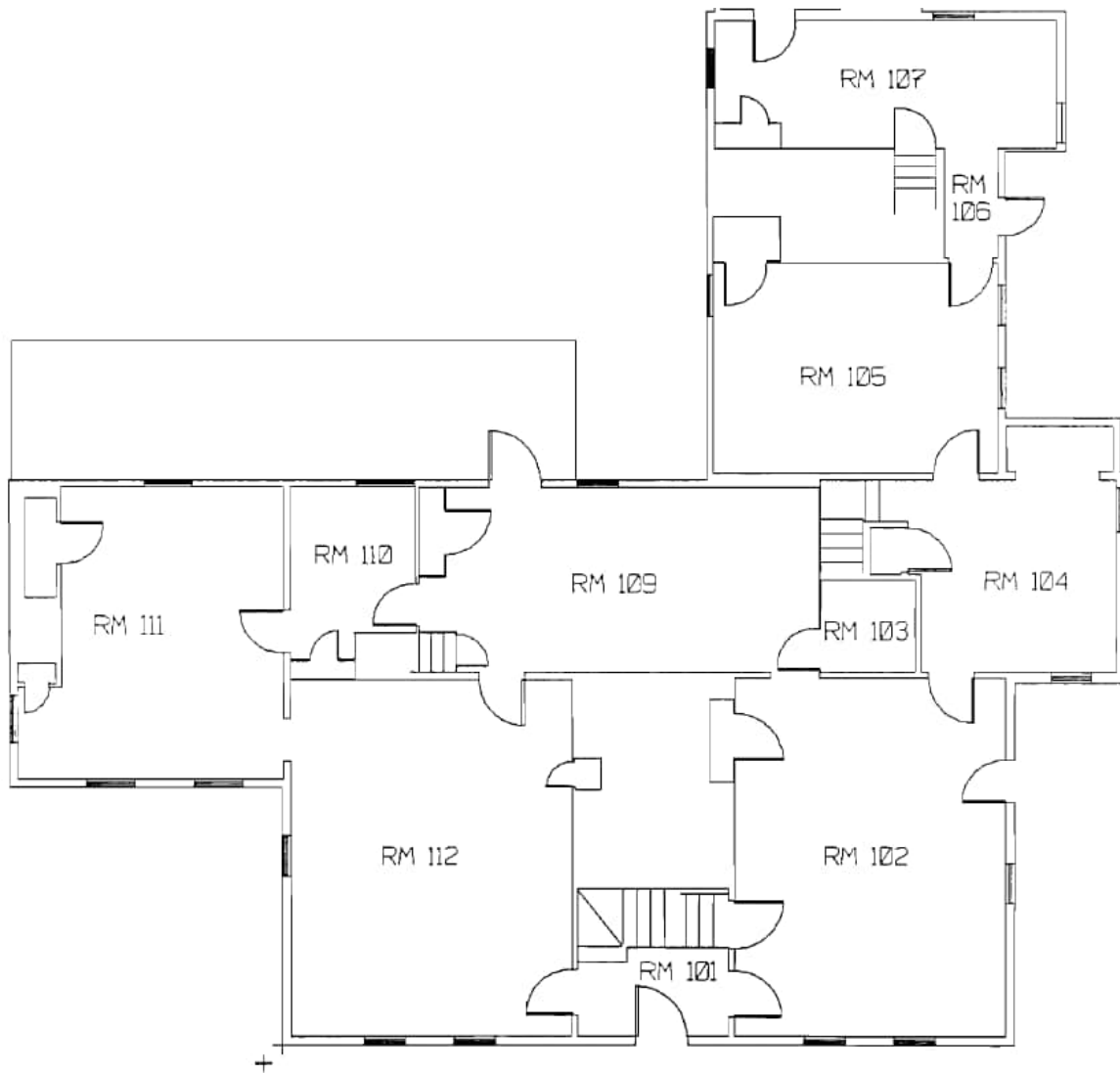
³ Abbott Lowell Cummings, *The Framed Houses of Massachusetts Bay, 1625-1725*, Harvard University Press, 1979.

of the Parsons house was erected 10 to 20 years earlier than postulated by the 1992 SPNEA investigation.

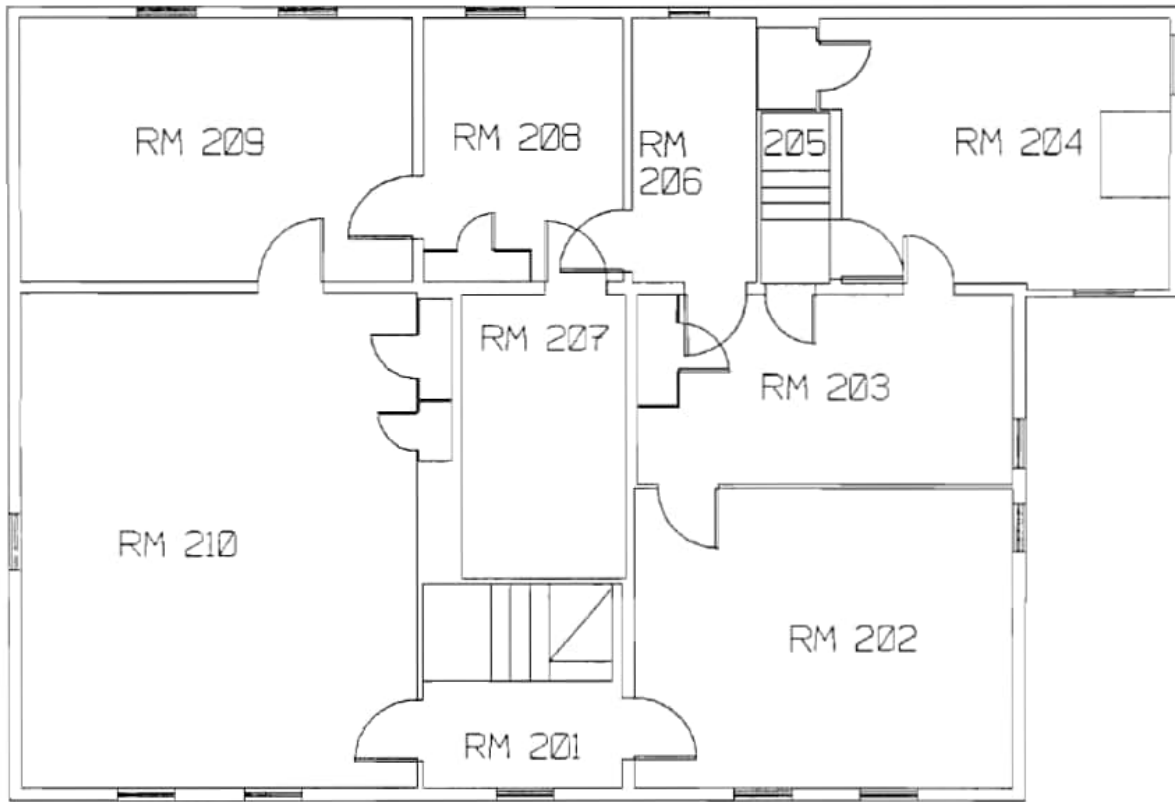
By 2018 the leadership of Historic Northampton wished to revisit and renew the concept of interpreting the history of the Parsons House in a broad historical context, and also to address a number of conservation and restoration issues in the house. A new investigation was commissioned to reevaluate the evolution of the house: to define and date all of the various stages of construction and remodeling through comprehensive historical research and additional physical investigation, including dendrochronology dating of all of the phases of the building's evolution; extensive paint investigation throughout the house to reveal changing decorative treatments, as well as addition of new material or removal of older fabric; identification of building materials and building technology through time to reveal the degree to which various owners responded to changing aesthetics, markets, and the world around them; and to place the original 1719 structure in its architectural context as an example of a regional architectural style and building technology which defined the buildings of the Connecticut River Valley in the 17th and early 18th centuries.

The results of that study, undertaken in 2024 and 2025, are presented in the following report. While much new information on the dating of the house and its various changes, and information about the lives of the various occupants and how they are reflected in the house has been gathered, there is much more to be learned through additional focused documentary research in family histories and in local and regional archives. The building archaeology undertaken during this study has provided new information about the original features of the house as well as the later alterations, but many questions remain unanswered. Answers to some of those questions will have to wait for future repair and restoration projects when floors, walls, and ceilings are systematically opened to reveal long-hidden evidence of earlier fenestration patterns, room partitions, and finishes. The processes of exploration and documentation must be integral components of any future work on the building, with new information recorded and integrated into the historical narrative of the Parsons House and the people who lived in it.

Parsons House Floor Plans and Room Numbers



PARSONS HOUSE
First Floor



PARSONS HOUSE
Second Floor

Floorplans of the Parsons House. Fireplaces and ovens not shown. From “Report on Building Archaeology at the Nathaniel Parsons House, Northampton, Massachusetts”, Gregory Clancey and John Leeke, 1992, Mss., Historic Northampton.

Executive Summary

New physical and documentary research on the Nathaniel Parsons house and its owners/occupants has revised the chronology and nature of the original construction of the house and its subsequent alterations as defined in the 1992 study conducted by the investigators from the Society for the Preservation of New Antiquities Conservation Center. It has provided valuable demographic and economic information about the people who owned, occupied, and altered the house over a period of more than three centuries. With the aid of building archaeology and dendrochronology and supported by new documentary research, the dates of construction of the house and its several additions have been refined, and attempts have been made to define the social, economic, and cultural context for these changes. The five major periods of construction are described below.

Phase 1A – c.1719 - mid-1720s

The original two-story, one-room deep, center-chimney, timber-framed building was constructed in 1719, likely by the brothers Nathaniel³ (1686-1738) and Jonathan³ (1691-1782) Parsons. The two brothers inherited the house lot and dwelling house of their father, Jonathan², who died in 1694. By 1743 Jonathan³ was identified as a housewright; it is likely that he trained as a housewright from his late teenage years. The form, construction methods, and joinery reflect the signature first period construction methods which defined Connecticut River Valley architecture of the late 17th and early 18th centuries. Physical evidence indicates that the ground-floor rooms were not fully finished until the mid- to late 1720s, and the second-floor rooms not until the early 19th century. A one-story lean-to was erected at the rear of the east room (the hall, Rm 102) as an original feature or an early addition. The house was built with leaded casement windows which appear to have been in place through the 18th century. Banks of three casement windows were located in the gable ends; the form of the windows on the front elevation is has not yet been determined. Brick nogging survives in a portion of the west wall of the house in Rm 112 (west parlor), suggesting that brick nogging had been installed in the exterior walls of the ground floor rooms when the house was built.

Phase 1B – c.1728

The west parlor (Rm 112) with its exposed framing members, chamfered summer beam, unplastered walls and ceiling, was finished, with beams and posts cased, and the walls and ceiling lathed and plastered. It is likely that event was related to Nathaniel³'s remarriage about 1728.

Phase 2– c.1800 – 1816

During this period the banks of casement windows – at least those on the front elevation facing Bridge Street – were replaced with what appeared to be paired sash windows. The removal of the Phase 1A rear lean-to erected behind the hall/kitchen (Rm 102) followed, replaced with a new one-story lean-to which extended across the entire rear of the house, giving a saltbox-form to the north slope of the roof. Dendrochronological evaluation of timbers in the large rear lean-to did not yield any reliable dates for the felling of the trees, but did reveal that some members of the frame were reused timbers of various dates. The construction of the large rear lean-to was

accompanied by the replacement of the original chimney, with a firebox added to the west parlor chamber (Rm 210) and two kitchen fireplaces with bake ovens outside of the firebox opening into the old hall/kitchen (Rm 102) and into the large central room of the new rear lean-to (Rm 109). With construction of the new chimney, the Phase 1 chimney breast walls in the west parlor (Rm 112) and the hall/kitchen (Rm 102) were replaced with new floor-to-ceiling paneling. In both the hall/kitchen and parlor wainscot was applied to the walls; new larger sash windows were installed throughout the house, replacing the smaller paired sash windows which had replaced the banks of casement windows on the front elevation; lath and plaster were applied to the ceiling and walls of the hall/kitchen; plaster and woodwork were painted; later, wallpaper was applied to the plastered walls; the staircase in the front entry lobby (Rm 101) was replaced with a new, more stylish form, and the walls there were lathed and plastered. The walls and ceilings of the two second-floor rooms were also lathed and plastered at this time. These changes represented the first of two major Federal Period-style remodeling campaigns.

Phase 3 – c.1816 – 1822

The one-story rear lean-to on the north side of the house was raised to two stories c.1816, and the Phase 1 and 2 roofs were removed and replaced with a new gabled-roof structure over the enlarged, two-story, double-pile structure. Several framing elements of the Phase 1 roof were reused in the new roof and expanded attic floor framing. All four of the exterior walls of the house were clapboarded for the first time, covering the Phase 1 and 2 exterior wall sheathing. The application of lath and plaster to the walls and ceilings of the new rear pile rooms on the second floor of the enlarged house occurred at this time.

Phase 4– c.1822-1830

The two-story east wing and one-story west wing were constructed. It is unclear if these occurred at the same time or in separate building campaigns only a few years apart. The erection of these two wings was part of the second Federal Period remodeling of the house, which also included work on the interior spaces. This included remodeling of the chimney breast wall in the former hall/kitchen (Rm 102). With the death of the elder Daniel Wright in 1824, it is likely that two kitchens were no longer needed. The Phase 2 paneled chimney breast wall in the former hall/kitchen (Rm 102) was hidden behind a new lath and plaster finish, and a new, more stylish Federal Period mantelpiece was installed; the bake oven which opened into this room was partially dismantled and a wall cupboard built in its place. This allowed the former hall/kitchen to be converted to a formal dining room, leaving the single active kitchen in Rm 109. In the west parlor (Rm 112) a similar mantelpiece replaced the earlier, bold bolection molding which surrounded the firebox. A new doorway was cut through the west wall of the parlor to the new west wing room, and a new matching architrave was applied to the doorway to Rm 109 in the north wall. The addition of the east wing resulted in the removal of the east walls of Rms 104 and 204 to enlarge those rooms into the new east wing. A chimney was erected on the east gable end of the new wing and fireplaces were erected in Rms 104 and 204.

Phase 5 – c.1830 - 1840

A one-story rear kitchen wing containing two rooms – a kitchen with fireplace and bake oven, and a workroom/pantry – and an attached woodshed were constructed. This relocation of the primary kitchen function to a new kitchen ell or wing reflected a process undertaken in many New England homes during the early decades of the 19th century, a part of the process of the transformation of multi-function rooms of the house into more formal, single-function rooms, and the removal of “dirty” activities of kitchens and kitchen work rooms to new one- or two-story additions.

Post 1840

Alterations which occurred over the next century were largely cosmetic, and involved either replacement of earlier an form with a later form (such as porches) or removal of earlier structural components. Exact dates for most of these changes are unknown. Appendix 8 presents a chronology of alterations and improvements to the house through the present ownership and stewardship of the property by Historic Northampton, Inc.

Methodology

The 2024-2025 study of the Nathaniel Parsons House involved historical research and a process of physical investigation identified as building archaeology. The two methods occurred simultaneously throughout the project, each informing new investigations in historical records and in the fabric of the building. Research began with a thorough review of the 1992 report prepared by members of the SPNEA Conservation Center, as well as the extensive records in the archives of Historic Northampton documenting more than 80 years of stewardship of the property by the Northampton Historical Society and Historic Northampton. These include records of repairs and improvements, photographs, architectural drawings, and interpretive materials. Genealogical research on the property owners was aided greatly by the genealogical compilation of the first six generations of the descendants of Cornet Joseph Parsons, published in 2002. New research in Northampton history-, property- and tax records was conducted at the Forbes Library Archives in Northampton, Hampshire County Probate and Land Records, U.S. and Massachusetts Census Records, online genealogical sources, and in digital archives of *The Hampshire Gazette*. These sources allowed the creation of a more comprehensive history of the owners and occupants of the house from the early 18th century through the early 20th century.

The physical investigation – building archaeology – began with intensive review of the archaeological evidence revealed by the SPNEA investigators in 1992. The written and photographic documentation of their removal of building fabric was carefully studied, and where possible, the archaeological excavations made in 1992 were revisited and expanded as necessary to help our understanding and reinterpretation of physical evidence of earlier finishes and configurations of spaces in the house. A number of new excavations were made on the exterior and interior of the structure which, together with the new documentary research, yielded new evidence and interpretation of the evolution and finishes of the house. As in all archaeological excavations, the principles of stratigraphy and chronology– whether it be in layers of paint or building elements – were critical in unraveling the interrelated sequences of construction, alteration, and changing decorative finishes.

Extensive paint investigation of interior woodwork and plaster was undertaken by paint conservator Christine Thomson. Detailed stratigraphic sequences of the paint history of each room were developed and analyzed through field inspection and laboratory-based microscopic investigation. This information, combined with careful building archaeology, allowed comparison of paint colors and sequences on various elements within each room and across the entire structure, and provided valuable information on the relative chronology of the installation and removal of various painted architectural elements and changing decorative aesthetics. (See Appendix 1.)

New dendrochronology – dating of the timbers through analyses of tree ring data – was conducted by William Flynt on the original c.1719 building and on the various additions. (See Appendix 5). The results allowed determination of the felling dates of the trees used to erect the timber frames of the various phases of construction. Based on historical knowledge that construction was traditionally begun in the spring following the harvesting of the trees during winter months, construction dates of the various building components were assigned in the year or two after the felling dates. As a result, reliable dendrochronology-derived dates of

construction were obtained not only for the original dwelling house but also for the raising of the rear saltbox-like lean-to to two stories c.1816 and the erection of the one-story west wing c.1822. Dates of construction of the saltbox-like rear lean-to, the two-story east wing, and the rear kitchen wing could not be determined due to inadequate tree-ring samples extracted from timbers in the frames of those additions.

Carbon-14 dating of grasses found in the earliest plaster in the Parsons House was conducted by Beta Analytic Laboratory, Miami, Florida, 2025. This process provided a rather wide date range which did not provide an exact date that the grass was mixed into the plaster as a binder (1684-1735) but it did confirm that the plaster was applied early in the history of the house. (See Appendix 6.)

Careful investigation of the joinery and framing methods in the Parsons House and in numerous other buildings in the region by timber framer Nevan Carling defined the characteristics of the late 17th- and early 18th century Connecticut River Valley vernacular building tradition and placed the Parsons House within that tradition (see Appendix 4).

Structural Engineer Elizabeth Acly of Cirrus Structural Engineering conducted a thorough examination of the building and prepared a report which assessed its structural condition, and presented recommendations for repairs and improvements. (See Appendix 8.)

History of Ownership and Occupation

The following discussion on the history and ownership of the Parsons house and house lot provides chronologies and detailed discussion of ownership and occupation of the house and property from 1654 to the present. Sections A and B address the period of ownership by direct descendants of Cornet Joseph Parsons from 1654 to 1807. Sections C and D address the period of ownership by Daniel and Chloe Wright and their descendants from 1807 to 1869, and by descendants of the Parsons/Wright/Bliss families from 1869 to 1941, the result of the marriage in 1848 between a daughter of the Wright family with the son of a direct fifth-generation descendant from Cornet Joseph¹ Parsons.



Nathaniel³ Parsons House, c.1882. (Courtesy, of Historic Northampton, Published by the Homestead View Company in the Springfield, MA, Directory of 1882-83 and 1883-84.

A. Chronology of Parsons Family Ownership and Occupation

1. 1654 - Cornet Joseph¹ Parsons (1620-1683) was granted a home lot of approximately 4 acres by the Proprietors of Northampton.

The longer boundary of the lot ran along what is now Bridge Street on the south and the shorter lot along Market Street on the west. A dwelling house was erected fronting on Market Street at the west end of the parcel. (Figure 1.)

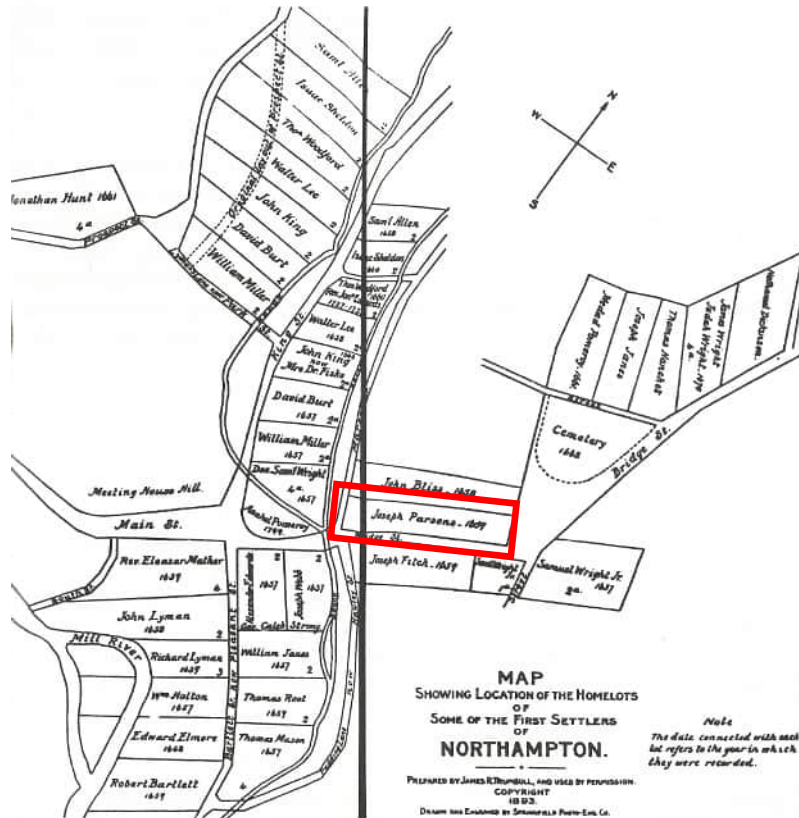
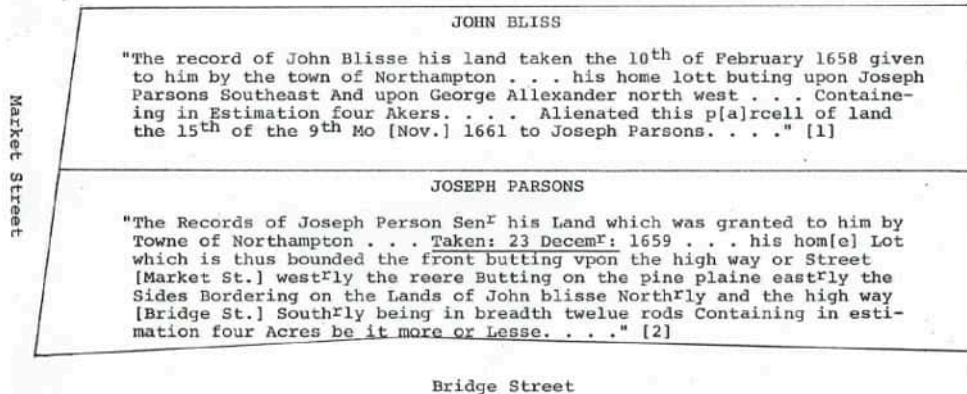


Figure 1. Map of Northampton showing early house lots and owners. Cornet Joseph¹ Parsons house lot granted to him by the Proprietors of Northampton is indicated by the red rectangle.⁴

⁴ Recording of early grants to Joseph Parsons by the Proprietors of Northampton were made 23 December 1659 and recorded in "Proprietors Records, 1650-1731, Northampton", pp. 99-100. As cited in Gerald James Parsons, *The Parsons Family, Volume One: The English Ancestry and Descendants to the Sixth Generation of Cornet Joseph Parsons (1620-1683)*, Gateway Press, Inc.: Baltimore, Maryland, 2002, p. 32. The map of Northampton is found on p. 33 of the same publication. The following diagrams showing the changes in the ownership and size of the lot were prepared by Gerald J. Parsons in 1984. Historic Northampton, Inc. Archives, "Parsons Binder." The following genealogical data on the Parsons family members is derived from Gerald James Parsons, *The Parsons Family, Volume One: The English Ancestry and Descendants to the Sixth Generation of Cornet Joseph Parsons (1620-1683)*, Gateway Press, Inc.: Baltimore, Maryland, 2002.

1654/1655 - 1661

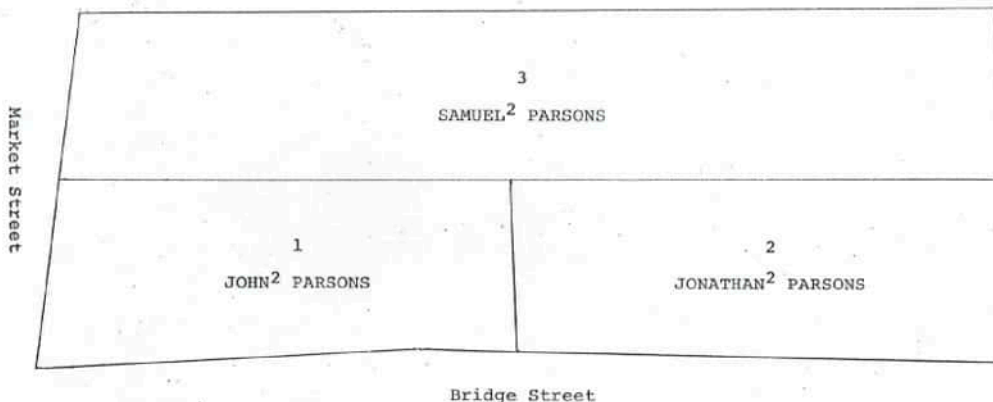
The home lots along Market Street were laid out in 1654 or 1655 soon after the settlement of Northampton. It seems likely that Joseph Parsons received his lot first it being on the corner.



[1] "Proprietor's Records, Town of Northampton, 1653 to 1680" (transcribed copy), p. 134.

[2] "Proprietors Records, 1650-1731, Northampton" (original volume), p. 99. Both volumes are located in the Northampton City Clerk's Office.

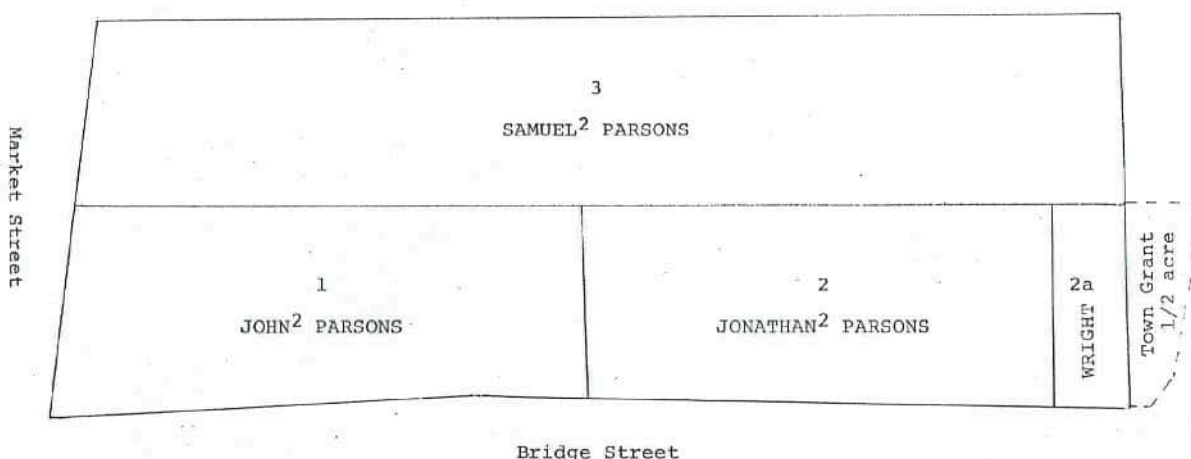
2. 1683 – Jonathan² Parsons received by bequest from his father Joseph¹ Parsons 2 acres for his home lot, being the east half of his father's original home lot. (HCPR, Bk. 1, pp. 235-236, recorded 25 March 1684.) Jonathan² Parsons married Mary Clark of Northampton in 1682, and likely constructed his house soon after on the home lot he inherited from his father.



The settlement of the estate of Cornet Joseph Parsons, dated 15 Jan. 1683[/4], appears on pages 235 and 236 of Book 1 of the Hampshire County Court Records at the Hampshire County Registry of Probate in Northampton. Samuel Parsons received the former home lot of John Bliss (Section 3) and Jonathan Parsons the remaining two acres of the original home lot (Section 2). Section 1 was already in the possession of John Parsons. "To Jonathan Parsons 4th Son to y^e deceased a homelot Cituate in . . . Northampton, Conteineing two acres, bounded by a high way [Bridge St.] Easterlie y^e CoMons Northerlie & South by John Parsons homelot & by a homelot of Sam^l Parsons West. . . ."

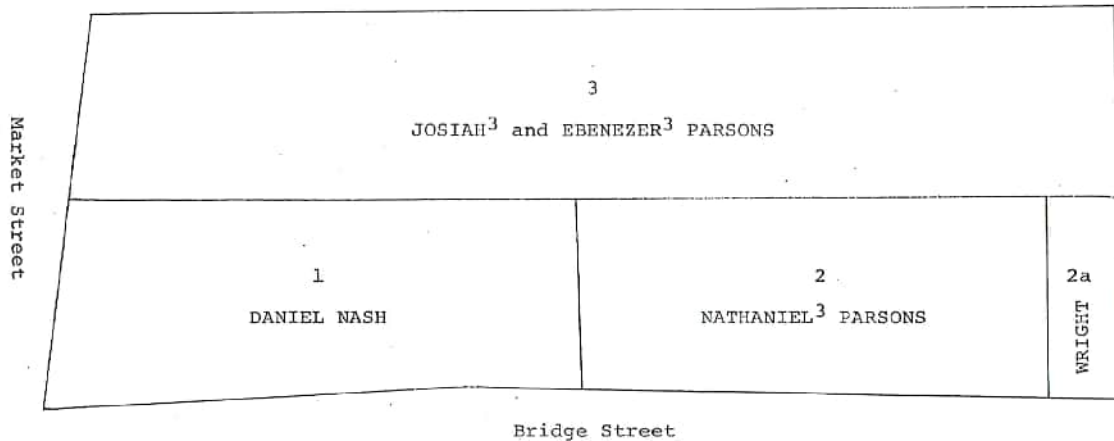
NOTE: As the property lies at an angle and not true north and south, some descriptions refer to the Market Street side as west and others south and the Bridge Street side as south and others east.

3. 1693 - Jonathan² Parsons sold one-half acre at the far east end of his home lot to Deacon Ebenezer Wright.



In 1693 Jonathan Parsons sold a 1/2 acre off the east end of his home lot to Deacon Ebenezer Wright, who received from the town another 1/2 acre adjoining. That homestead descended to Capt. Noah Wright and others in that line [Judd MSS, "Northampton, Mass. Streets and Various Owners," p. 19]. The deed has not been found on record.

4. 1694 - Jonathan² Parsons died Oct.-Nov. 1694 at the age of 37. His house and 2-acre home lot were inherited by his eldest son Nathaniel³ (double share) and his second son Jonathan³ (single share). (HCPR, Box 110, No. 7.)
- At the time of their father's death Nathaniel³ and Jonathan³ were 8 and 1 years old., respectively. Jonathan²'s widow Mary remarried c.1698 to Benjamin Hastings of Hatfield, and removed with her second husband to Hatfield in 1707. In 1707 children born to Jonathan² and Mary Parsons' included Nathaniel³- 21; Mary³-19; Hannah³ - 17; Jonathan³ - 14; and Lydia³ - 12. Their mother Mary and her second husband Benjamin Hastings had four more children born in Northampton before their departure to Hatfield in 1707, where their last child was born. In 1706, before the departure of the Hastings family to Hatfield, the house in which they resided in Northampton was occupied by Mary and Benjamin Hastings, and eight children from the two marriages between the ages of 20 and a newborn. It is likely that Nathaniel³ and at least some of the older Parsons siblings continued to reside in their deceased father's house after their mother and younger siblings moved to Hatfield. The final settlement of Jonathan² Parsons' estate occurred in 1709, in which it was declared that Nathaniel³ was to have the housing and home lot as part of his share of his deceased father's estate.



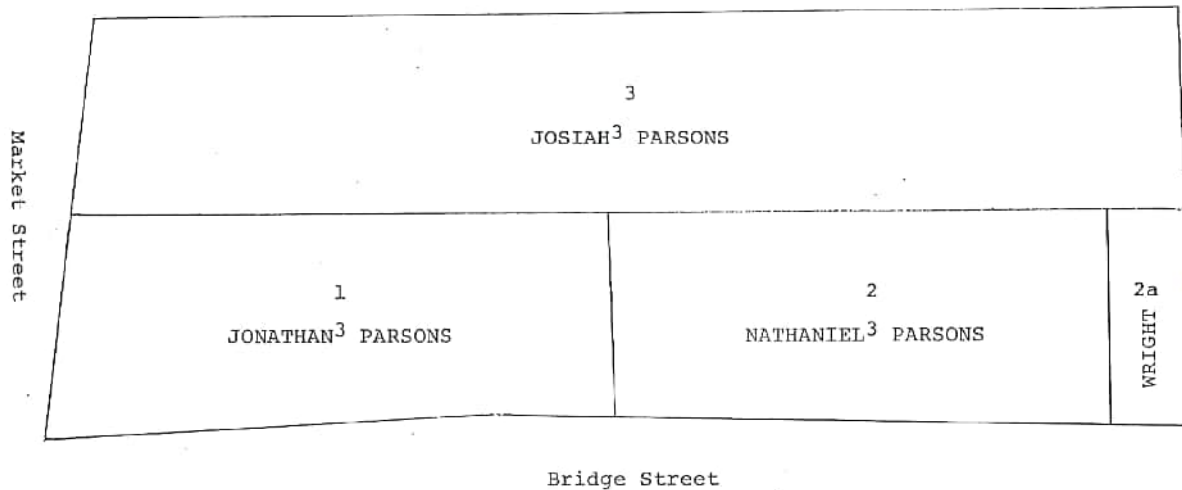
On 3 Mar. 1709, the final settlement of the estate of Jonathan² Parsons gave "to Nath¹¹ Parsons the Eldest Son a double share . . . & to Jonathan Parsons 2^d Son One Single share . . . Nath¹¹ to have the houseing and homelot in part of his share" [Hampshire Co. Probate Records, Box 110, No. 7]. On 12 Dec. 1709, Lt. Samuel² Parsons late of Northampton but then living in Durham, Ct., with the consent of his wife Rhoda sold to his nephews, Ebenezer³ and Josiah³ Parsons, his home lot "with an Mantion house & two barnes thereupon standing" being four acres bounded northerly by John Alexander, southerly by Daniel Nash and Nathaniel³ Parsons, westerly by a highway [Market St.] and easterly by the sequestered land [Old Hampshire Co. Deeds, D:131]. Thus between 1706 and 1709 John² Parsons had sold to Daniel Nash, but the deed was not recorded. In 1715 Ebenezer³ Parsons sold his half of Section 3 to his brother Josiah³ but the deed was not recorded [Judd MSS, Northampton Series, 1:36].

Both Nathaniel³ Parsons and his brother Jonathan³ married in 1714 - Nathaniel³ to Experience Wright in July and his brother Jonathan³ to Abigail Smith in August. Experience died in 1715 two months after giving birth to a stillborn child. It appears that the two brothers and their young families resided together after their marriages in 1714 in the house which Nathaniel³ inherited from their father. By 1719 two children were born to Jonathan³ and Abigail Parsons.

1719 d.⁵ – The Parsons House was erected on the 2-acre parcel which Nathaniel³ inherited from his father. The house was likely constructed by the two brothers Nathaniel³ and Jonathan³ Parsons; in 1743 Jonathan was identified as a housewright in a deed, and it is likely that by 1719, when he was 26 years old, he was already a journeyman housewright, if not a full master housewright. It is unclear if Nathaniel³ resided in the new house soon after its raising or continued to reside in the old homestead with his brother Jonathan³ and his growing family until the house was made habitable.

⁵ The designation of the date of construction of a building followed by "d." indicates that the date was determined as a result of dendrochronology dating. A date derived through dendrochronology sampling and analysis should be understood as the "date of construction no earlier than", based on the historical knowledge that traditionally the frames of most buildings in the region were raised in the spring following the year in which the trees were felled. Timbers which show the last year of growth to be 1718 would therefore be given a dendrochronology date of "no earlier than 1719."

1726 – In September 1726 Jonathan³ Parsons purchased from Daniel Nash the dwelling house and 2-acre home lot on which the c.1654 house of Cornet Joseph¹ Parsons stood. (Old Hampshire County Deeds, Vol. E, pp. 50-51.) It is not known when the c.1683 house erected by Jonathan² Parsons on his 2-acre home lot was dismantled or moved, as it was located on the same 2-acre parcel on which the Nathaniel³ Parsons house was built c.1719. It is assumed that Jonathan² Parsons' c.1683 house was occupied by widowed Nathaniel³ and Jonathan³ Parsons and his young family when the new house was being built in 1719, and continued to be occupied by Jonathan³ and his family – and possibly by Nathaniel³ as well – until Jonathan³'s purchase of his grandfather's home lot and dwelling house in 1726. Nathaniel³ Parsons, at the age of 42, married his second wife Abigail Bunce in 1728; it is likely that by this date, or soon after, both the hall/kitchen (Rm 102) and the west parlor (Rm 112) were finished, while the two second-floor chambers remained unfinished until the early 19th century. Over the next decade five children were born to Nathaniel³ and Abigail (Bunce) Parsons, three of whom survived to adulthood.⁶



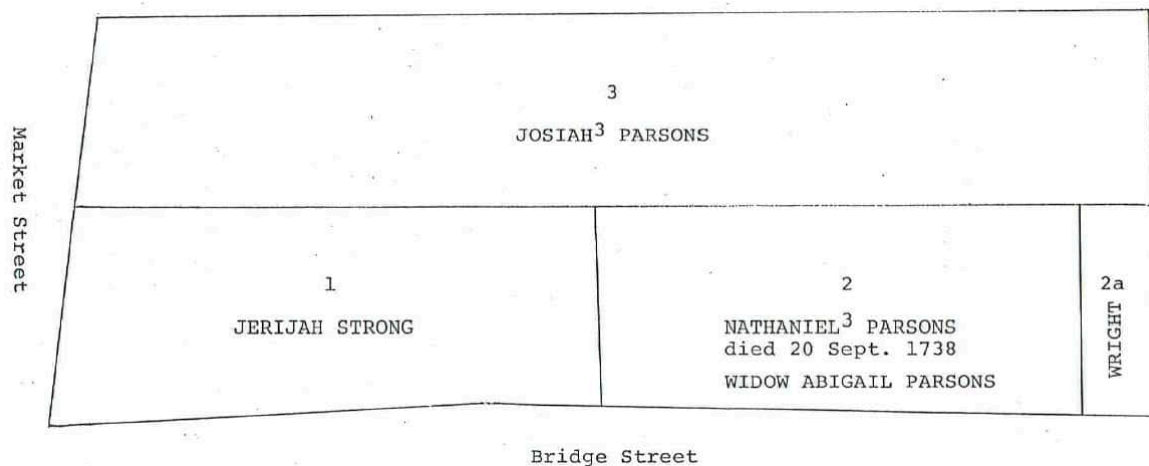
In Sept. 1726, Daniel Nash of Northampton with the consent of his wife Experience sold "a Certain house & homestead Scituate In . . . Northampton" (Section 1) to Jonathan³ Parsons of Northampton. It was bounded northerly on the homestead of Nathaniel Parsons, easterly on the highway [Bridge St.], southerly on the highway [Market St.], and westerly on Josiah Parsons' homestead. Included in the sale was a half acre on the "Contrary Side of the highway" (Market St.) [Old Hampshire Co. Deeds, E: 50-51]. Thus in 1726 the original home lot of Cornet Joseph¹ Parsons was in the possession of his two grandsons, the brothers Jonathan³ (Section 1) and Nathaniel³ Parsons (Section 2).

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⁶ It is not known when exactly Nathaniel³ took up residence in his new house after the building was raised and enclosed in 1719. He may have moved in when the first room – likely the hall or kitchen (Rm 102) – was completed, or he may have continued to live in the house which he inherited from his father until the west parlor was completed and his marriage to Abigail Bunce in 1728. If the latter, it would mean that his father's house was dismantled or relocated sometime after this date. Additional documentary and archaeological investigation in the form of a ground penetrating radar survey of the property may identify the former location of the c.1683 house.

5. Nathaniel³ Parsons died on 20 September 1738.

After the death of Nathaniel³ in 1738 at the age of 52, the house and land were inherited by widow Abigail Bunce Parsons and children, Experience⁴ (b.1729), Elisha⁴ (b.1731), and Nathaniel⁴ (b. 1733). His probate inventory dated 21 Dec. 1738 listed a house and barn and lot the house stands on valued at £200. (Hampshire Co. Probate Box 110, No. 271.)⁷



About 1736 Jonathan³ Parsons apparently sold Section 1 to Jerijah Strong who is found as the next owner on record. Nathaniel³ Parsons died 20 Sept. 1738, and his widow Abigail and their children continued to reside on Section 2. The inventory of his estate, dated 21 Dec. 1738, lists "The House & Barn & Lot y^t [that] the House Stands on Prised att £200" [Hampshire Co. Probate Records, Box 110, No. 27].

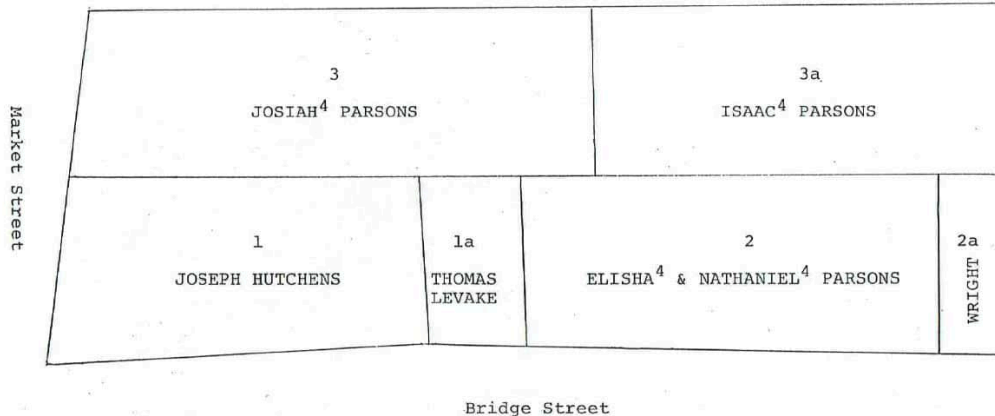
Widow Abigail and her three surviving young children continued to reside in the house after the death of her husband. Daughter Experience⁴ married in 1754 and left the household to live with her new husband. After his death in 1756, Experience⁴ moved back into the Parsons House with her infant daughter, and both continued to reside in the house with her widowed mother and brothers until 1768 when Experience remarried and moved out with her daughter.

6. 1768 - Experience⁴ Parsons sold her share of the home lot and property to her brother Nathaniel⁴.

On May 18, 1768, the day before her second marriage, Experience⁴ Parsons Loomis sold for £30 to brother Nathaniel⁴ her share of "the house, Barn & home lot on which I and the said Nathaniel⁴ now Dwell which was my Hond. Father's Mr. Nathaniel³ Parsons Late Decd". (Hampshire Co. deeds, 3:116-118). At this time her widowed mother Abigail still retained her widow's dower rights to the property, and sons Nathaniel⁴ and Elisha⁴ also had inherited rights to the house and property. Nathaniel⁴ (age 35) married Sarah Rust in 1768; between 1769 and 1782 Sarah gave birth to nine children, seven of whom survived to adulthood. Elisha⁴ (age 39) married Lucy Alvord in 1770, and he and his young family also resided in

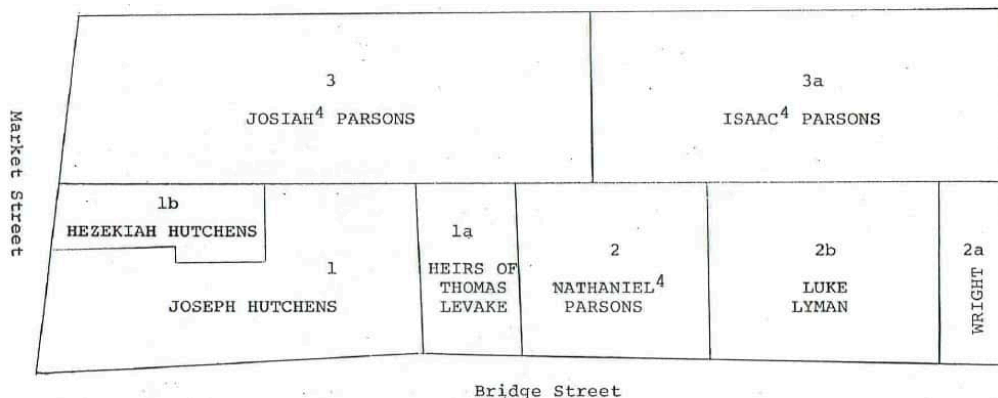
⁷ The probate inventory of Nathaniel³ Parsons included two home lots totaling £190, and approximately 25 to 30 acres of farmland in five parcels. He was a farmer who owned a "yoke of cattle" and a "yoke of steers", two cows, a heifer and calf, a "grisled" mare and a bay mare, two hogs and four small swine. His entire estate was valued at approximately £1,500.

the house; three children were born to Elisha and Lucy by 1770, and twins in 1779. Elisha⁴ and his family moved out of the Parsons house sometime between 1777 and 1779. By 1777 the house was occupied by the widow Abigail, married sons Nathaniel⁴ and Elisha⁴ and their spouses, and eight children under the age of nine, for a total of 13 individuals.



On 24 Apr. 1770, Joseph Hutchens sold to Thomas Levake (later spelled Lavake) "Half an Acre of Land at the Northerly end of the Houselot in Northampton . . . on which I now dwell bounded . . . Easterly on the County Road [Bridge St.] Westerly on the Homelot of M^r Josiah Parsons on which he now dwells Northerly on the Homelot of Mess^{rs} Elisha & Nathaniel Parsons on which they now dwell and to extend Southerly the whole width of my Lot till it makes half an Acre" [Hampshire Co. Deeds, 16:131].

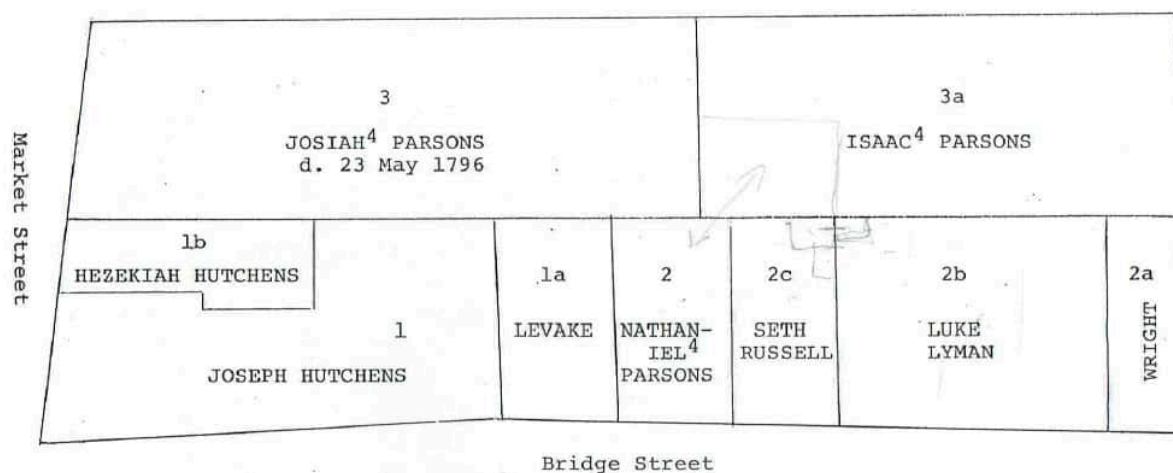
7. 1785, 1789 – Nathaniel⁴ Parsons sold the eastern portion of the home lot to Luke Lyman and one-half of a barn. (HCLR Vol. 5, p. 337; HCLR Vol. 6, p. 135).



By 1785 Nathaniel⁴ Parsons had become sole owner of Sections 2 and 2b. On 23 Mar. 1785, Nathaniel Parsons sold to Luke Lyman "part of the Homelot on which I now dwell that part that lies Joining on Joel Wrights homestead . . . the part . . . meant to be conveyed is one hundred & Eleven rods & to take it from Joel Wrights homestead south of equal width from the Street [Bridge] to Isaac Parsons homestead on which he now dwells till it make one hundred & Eleven rods" [Hampshire Co. Deeds, 5:337]. On 12 Jan. 1789, Nathaniel sold to Lyman an additional 46 1/2 rods of land "lying adjoining the Homestead on which he now lives . . . & one half of the Barn which stands on the same" [ibid., 6:135]. On 9 July 1785, Joseph Hutchens sold to Hezekiah Hutchens "A Part of the Homelot which I live on in Northampton . . . beginning on the Street called Alexanders Lane [Market St.] at the Corner of M^r Josiah Parsons Homelot from thence running upon said Street to a Stake within two Feet of my Shop . . . [being] four Feet wider at the North end than it is at the Street . . . containing about half an acre & half a quarter more or less" [ibid., 17:555].

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8. 1 June 1796 - Nathaniel⁴ Parsons sold to Seth Russell the northern half of his home lot, reserving the barn standing on said land (HCLR Vol. 11, p. 285).
9. 4 July 1796 - Nathaniel⁴ Parsons sold to his two sons Nathaniel⁵ and Luther⁵ the remainder of his house and homestead together with the barn (HCLR Vol. 11, p. 286).



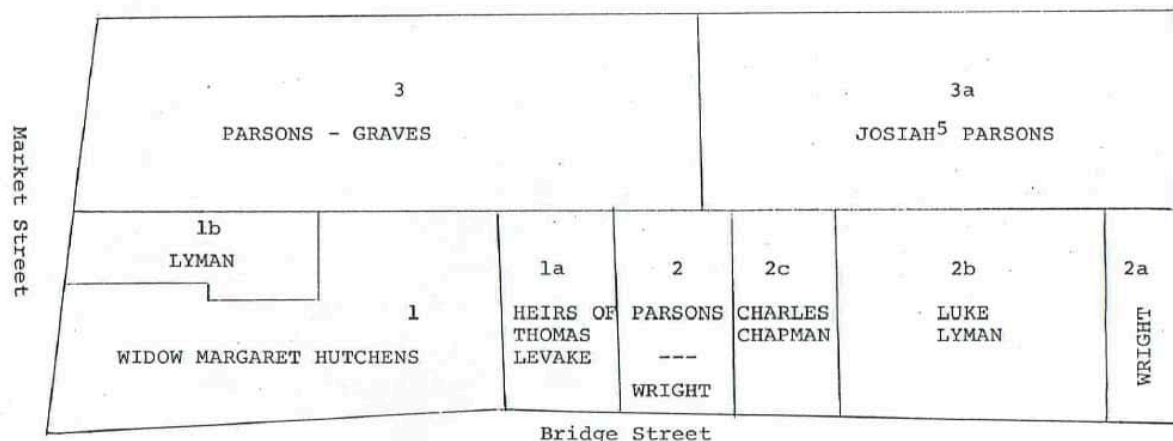
On 1 June 1796, Nathaniel⁴ Parsons sold to Seth Russell of Northampton "A Piece of Land in Northampton . . . being part of the Homelot which I live upon to wit the Northeasterly part bounded Northeasterly on the Homelot of M^r Luke Lyman Southeasterly upon the Town Street called the Plain [Bridge St.] and extending upon the Street from the Corner of said Lymans Homelot five Rods & ten Feet Northwesterly on M^r Isaac Parsons Homelot . . . Southwesterly on the remainder of my Homelot . . . excepting the Barn standing on said Land which the said Nathaniel reserves out of this conveyance" [Hampshire Co. Deeds, 11:285]. On 4 July 1796, Nathaniel Parsons sold to "my two Sons" Nathaniel⁵ Parsons and Luther⁵ Parsons "The remainder of my House and Homestead which I have not sold to Capt Hezekiah [sic; should say Seth] Russell together with my Barn" [ibid., 11:286]. Capt. Hezekiah Russell was the father of Seth.

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The Parsons family and property underwent considerable changes during the last decades of the 18th century and first decade of the 19th century by the departures of several of their children and their young families. The household in the 1800 US Census consisted of Nathaniel⁴ and wife Sarah (age 67 and at least 51); and 4 unmarried sons and daughters: Nathaniel⁵ (31), Luther⁵ (29), Eunice⁵ (18), and Persis⁵ (22). Abigail, the widow of Nathaniel³ died in 1789; Sarah (Rust), wife of Nathaniel⁴ died in 1801, and Nathaniel⁴ died in 1806; son Nathaniel⁵ married in 1801, and son Luther⁵ and daughter Eunice⁵ both married in 1806. Nathaniel⁵ and Luther⁵ continued to reside in the house until 1807 with their young families, while Eunice⁵ departed the household after her marriage in 1806. Daughter Persis⁵ was married in 1809 after the Parsons had sold and vacated the property in 1807 and 1808.

10. 22 January 1807 Luther⁵ Parsons sold to Seth Rust "one half of the homestead in Said Northampton on which I now live with one half of the buildings thereon being in common and undivided" (HCLR, Vol. 25, p.389).
11. 21 March 1807 Seth Rust sold Ralph Huntington "One half of the homestead ...on which Nathaniel⁵ Parsons now lives being in common and undivided with the said Nathaniel⁵ ...being the homestead I purchased of Luther⁵ Parsons" (HCLR, Vol. 25, p.506).
12. 22 April 1807 Ralph Huntington sold to Joseph Lyman the one-half interest in the Parsons house and land which he purchased from Seth Rust (HCLR, Vol. 26, p. 46).
13. 27 April 1807 Joseph Lyman sold to Chloe Wright, wife of Daniel Wright, the one-half interest in the Parsons house and property he purchased from Ralph Huntington (HCLR, Vol. 56, p. 537).
14. 6 May 1808 Nathaniel⁵ Parsons sold to Horace Graves "A certain piece of land in said Northampton being that part of the homestead on which I now live & is one half of the whole being in common ...with Joseph Lyman, Esq., ...the whole lot containing one-half acre...with one half of the buildings thereon" (HCLR Vol. 27, p. 513.)

Section 2: On 22 Jan. 1807, Luther⁵ Parsons sold to Seth Rust "One half of the homestead in s^d Northampton on which I now live with one half the buildings thereon being in common and undivided" [*ibid.*, 25:389]. On 21 Mar. 1807, Seth Rust sold to Ralph



Huntington "One half of the homestead in said Northampton on which Nathaniel Parsons now lives being in common & undivided with the said Nathaniel together with one half the Buildings thereon Standing bounded Southeast on the County road [Bridge St.] - Northeast on Charles Chapmans land, Northwest on land belonging to the Heirs of Josiah Parsons - Southwest by land lately owned by Thomas Levake Containing in the whole one acre . . . being the Same homestead I purchased of Luther Parsons" [*ibid.*, 25:506]. On 22 Apr. 1807, Ralph Huntington sold to Joseph Lyman [*ibid.*, 26:46]; and on 27 Apr. 1807, Joseph Lyman sold to Chloe Wright, wife of Daniel Wright [*ibid.*, 56:537]. On 6 May 1808, Nathaniel⁵ Parsons sold to Horace Graves "A certain piece of Land in said Northampton being that part of the homestead on which I now live & is one half of the whole being in Common . . . with Joseph Lyman Esquire & is bounded Southeasterly on the County Road [Bridge St.] Northeasterly by Maj^r Charles Chapmans Northwesterly on the Heirs of Josiah Parsons deceased partly & partly on Josiah Parsons & Southwesterly on Thomas Levakes Land the whole lot containing one half Acre . . . with one half the buildings thereon" [*ibid.*, 27:513]. On 10 Sept. 1808, Horace Graves sold to Ferdinand Hunt Wright [*ibid.*, 27:609].

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On the same day that Nathaniel⁵ Parsons sold his interest in the Parsons House and house lot to Horace Graves, Graves sold to Nathaniel⁵ Parsons for \$500 five and one-half acres of land with buildings “in that part of Northampton ... commonly called and known by the name of Lickinwater Street...”. Presumably Nathaniel⁵ Parsons and his family moved to this property from the Parsons House (HCLR, Vol 27, p. 514, executed 6 May 1808, recorded 7 May 1808).

15. 10 September 1808 Horace Graves sold to Ferdinand Hunt Wright the land and one-half of the buildings he purchased of Nathaniel⁵ Parsons on 6 May 1808 (HCLR vol. 27, p. 609).

With this purchase by Horace Graves of one-half of the land and buildings formerly belonging to Nathaniel⁵ Parsons, and its subsequent sale to Ferdinand Hunt Wright four months later, ownership of the former Parsons house and much-reduced house lot passed fully into the ownership of members of the Wright family – one-half interest to Chloe Wright, the second wife of Daniel Wright, and one-half interest to Ferdinand Hunt Wright, the son of Daniel Wright and stepson of Chloe Wright.

B. Parsons Family Ownership and Occupation of the House Lot and Buildings: Discussion

Joseph¹ Parsons (1620-1683)

1654 - Cornet Joseph¹ Parsons (1620-1683) was granted a home lot of 4 acres by the Proprietors of Northampton, recorded 1659. The lot extended from what is now Market Street eastward approximately 70 rods along the north side of what is now Bridge Street. In addition he was granted 81 acres aside from his home lot.⁸ Joseph Parsons became one of the leading citizens and residents of Northampton, both because of his wealth and his civic standing. He had a very close personal and business relationship with John Pynchon, founder of Springfield, and was granted rights by Pynchon to manage and profit from trade with the Indigenous groups in the Connecticut River valley around and north of Northampton. He was involved in the negotiation for and acquisition of land from the Native sachems for the towns of Northfield, Hadley, and three other towns in the region, often acquiring grants of parcels of land within each town. At the time of his death in 1683 his estate was one of the largest probated in the 17th century in Hampshire County (total value of £2088), four-fifths of which was in houses and lands in Springfield, Northampton, Northfield, and Boston. He resided in Northampton until the mid - 1670s. In 1676 he was listed as a merchant in Boston, where he owned a home and warehouse. His residency in Boston coincided with the trial for witchcraft against his wife, of which she was acquitted. In 1679 he purchased land from John Pynchon in Springfield and resided there until his death in 1683. In addition to his mercantile and real estate ventures were investments in a lead mine and ownership of saw- and gristmills in several Massachusetts and Connecticut communities.

Joseph Parsons and his wife Mary (Bliss), had eleven children born between c.1647 and 1672, among them seven sons, four of whom lived to adulthood. Of these, three – John², Samuel², and Jonathan² - inherited portions of his original home lot in Northampton. Eldest son Joseph² (c.1647-1729) inherited a home lot in Northampton and resided there until his death at the age of 83. Like his father, he was active in town and governmental affairs, serving in numerous local offices, as well as a deputy from Northampton to the General Court in Boston almost annually between 1693 and 1724.

Like his father, Joseph² had close business ties with John Pynchon of Springfield. He was an investor in an iron works in Springfield, and owned gristmills and sawmills in Northampton, Springfield, Enfield, and Dorchester. During the first decade of the 18th century he resided in Springfield, but later returned to Northampton. Like his father he was also involved in several large purchases of land in Durham and Middletown, Connecticut, and bequeathed a large parcel of this land to his son Moses. He also was involved in the settlement of the town of Sheffield, Massachusetts. Joseph¹'s son Samuel² also settled in Durham.

Son John² (1650-1728) resided in Northampton until his death at the age of 79, having inherited his father's house and a 2-acre portion of the home lot. John sold this land sometime between 1706 and 1709 and moved to a parcel of land further east on Bridge Street, where he resided

⁸ "Proprietors Records, 1650-1731, Northampton", pp. 99-100. As cited in Gerald James Parsons, *The Parsons Family, Volume One: The English Ancestry and Descendants to the Sixth Generation of Cornet Joseph Parsons (1620-1683)*, Gateway Press, Inc.: Baltimore, Maryland, 2002, p. 32.

until his death. In 1726 the house and parcel of Joseph¹ Parsons were returned to Parsons family ownership by the purchase of the house and lot by Jonathan³ Parsons.

Jonathan² Parsons (1657 -1694)

Jonathan² Parsons was the sixth-born of seven sons and four daughters of Joseph¹ and his wife Mary (Bliss) Parsons. He married c.1682 Mary Clark; in 1683, when his father Cornet Joseph¹ Parsons died, he inherited a 2-acre home lot at the east end of Joseph¹'s original 4-acre home lot - the parcel on which the current Nathaniel³ Parsons house stands. It is unclear if he had built his house on this parcel prior to his marriage c.1682, or whether it occurred after 1683 when he inherited the home lot. Two of his older brothers – Samuel² and John² – also inherited adjacent home lots: John² inherited his father's house and 2-acre home lot, while Samuel² inherited a 4-acre home lot and house which was located immediately to the north of Jonathan²'s and John²'s home lots, a lot Joseph¹ Parsons purchased from John Bliss in 1661.

Nathaniel³ Parsons (1686 -1738)

After the death of Jonathan² Parsons in 1694, the 2-acre home lot on which his house stood, which was the eastern half of the original 4-acre home lot granted to Cornet Joseph¹ Parsons in 1654, his eldest son Nathaniel³ Parsons inherited a double-share of the housing and land of his father, while his younger brother Jonathan³ inherited a single share. Widow Mary (Clark) Parsons and her five children (the fifth child was born in May 1695 - 7 months after Jonathan²'s death) continued to reside in the house for at least the next decade.⁹

Widow Mary Parsons married Benjamin Hastings of Hatfield by 1698. Together they had 5 more children, born in 1699, 1701, 1703, 1706, and 1707. The first four were born in Northampton; the last in Hatfield, suggesting that Mary and Benjamin Hastings and most children from both marriages had moved to Hatfield by 1707. Until that time, it is likely that they all lived in the house erected by Jonathan² Parsons'

The final settlement of Jonathan² Parsons' estate occurred in 1709 in which it was confirmed that his two sons Nathaniel³ and Jonathan³ were to retain all housing and lands, with Nathaniel³ to have the housing and home lot in part of his share, Jonathan³ to receive real estate, and Nathaniel³ and Jonathan³ "to pay proportionably to the daughters and copartners what their just shares are within two years..." (Hampshire Co. Probate, Box 110, No. 7). In 1709 Nathaniel³ was 23 years old; brother Jonathan³ 16 years old, and his full sisters Mary³, Hannah³ and Lydia³ were aged 21, 19, 14 respectively; his half-siblings, the three living children of Mary and Benjamin Hastings in 1709, were aged 10, 4, and 2. While it is not clear which of the children remained in Northampton after Martha (Clark Parsons) and Benjamin Hastings moved to Hatfield in 1707, it is likely that several remained in Northampton and continued to reside in their parents' house. Daughter Mary³ was married in January 1713 in Northampton to Isaac Graves of Hatfield, suggesting she may have continued to reside in the Northampton house with her older brother Nathaniel³ until her marriage; Hannah³ was married in 1710 in Colchester, CT,

⁹ The following discussion of Jonathan² Parsons and his wife and children is based on information provided in *The Parsons Family, Volume 1, The English Ancestry and Descendants to the Sixth Generation of Cornet Joseph Parsons (1620-1683)*, compiled by Gerald James Parsons (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 2002), pp. 114-120; 207-227.

and resided there until moving with her husband and children to Elizabeth Town, New Jersey, by 1720 (it is unclear when and how she ended up in Colchester); Lydia³, who likely moved with her mother and stepfather to Hatfield in 1707 when she was 12 years old, was married in Hatfield in 1715 and resided there until her death in 1773. It is very likely that Nathaniel³ remained in Northampton and continued to live in the house he inherited. It is unclear if his brother Jonathan³ also remained in Northampton after 1707; in August 1714 he married in Hatfield, Abigail Smith, who was born there. However, he and his new wife resided in Northampton after their marriage, as the births of their children were recorded in the Northampton Vital Records. More than likely they occupied the old homestead together with older brother Nathaniel³ and his new bride, Experience Wright, who were married in July 1714 in Northampton. Experience died in June 1715 two weeks after giving birth to a child who died soon after birth. It appears that the widowed Nathaniel³ and his brother Jonathan³ and his young family (5 children born between 1716 and 1726) jointly occupied the old homestead of their father Jonathan².

In 1726 Jonathan³ Parsons purchased the lot and dwelling house immediately to the south – the former house of his uncle John² Parsons and his grandfather Cornet Joseph¹ Parsons before him – at the corner of present Bridge and Market Streets. Jonathan³ moved there with his family and continued to occupy that house until about 1736 when he sold the house and land and moved with his family to Suffield in Hampshire County, MA. In 1728 his older brother Nathaniel³ Parsons married Abigail Bunce of Hartford. Abigail gave birth to five children between 1729 and 1733 (twins born in 1730 died in infancy).

Dendrochronology dating of the present Parsons House has yielded a felling date of the trees used to build the frame of the house as 1718.¹⁰ It is likely that Nathaniel³ and Jonathan³ (the latter was identified as a carpenter/ housewright) together erected the present house in the following year or two.¹¹

This sequence of events, coupled with the physical evidence, presents two possible scenarios for the construction and occupation of the new house:

- Following the marriages of both Nathaniel³ and Jonathan³ Parsons in 1714, the two couples jointly occupied the old Jonathan² Parsons house in which they grew up and which was inherited by Nathaniel³;

¹⁰ William A. Flynt, *A Dendrochronology Study of Select Framing Timbers from the Nathaniel Parsons House, Northampton, Massachusetts*, November 2024, Mss. at Historic Northampton, Inc. (See Appendix 4.)

¹¹ Parsons family ownership and operation of saw- and gristmills in Northampton dates back to the late 1670s when two of Nathaniel³ and Jonathan³ Parsons uncles – John² and Joseph² Parsons – owned and operated a gristmill and sawmill in Northampton. In 1714 Joseph² Parsons purchased a one-half right to a sawmill in 1714 from Benjamin Stebbins on Broad Brook at the foot of Mt. Tom. Joseph²'s 1729 probate inventory listed 1/3 ownership of a cornmill and sawmill, which he bequeathed to his son Ebenezer³, and ¼ part of the Town sawmill and ½ of a sawmill where the iron works stood in Northampton. (Gerald James Parsons, *The Parsons Family: Volume 1*, pp.96-97, 99; James Russell Trumbull, *History of Northampton, Massachusetts, from its Settlement in 1654, Vol. I* (Northampton, MA., Press of Gazette Printing Co., 1898), pp. 221,378, 390, 391, 544, 545.

- Construction of the new house (present Parsons House) was begun in 1719 or soon after while the widowed Nathaniel³ and Jonathan³ and his young family continued to occupy the old homestead while construction was underway;
- Scenario 1. The old homestead was removed and the new structure was built over the foundation and cellar of the old homestead.
 - This scenario is considered because the original excavated cellar which survives under the west front room (Rm 112) of the present Parsons House is smaller than the area enclosed by the south, west, and north sills of the house. The south stone wall enclosing the cellar is located approximately three feet to the north of the south wall of the house; the south sill of the house is supported by a shallow stone foundation rather than by the actual south wall of the cellar.
- Scenario 2. Construction of the new house was begun c.1719 a short distance to the north of Jonathan²'s c.1683 house, where Nathaniel³ and Jonathan³ Parsons and his young family continued to reside at least until several rooms in the new house were made habitable.

These two possible scenarios raise an important question: if the c.1683 house was removed and the new house was erected over the old cellar c.1719, where did Nathaniel³ and Jonathan³ Parsons and his young family reside while the new house was being raised and made habitable? It seems most likely that the c.1683 Jonathan² Parsons house remained standing nearby for some time, occupied by Jonathan³ and his young family until their relocation to the house on the adjacent house lot to the south which they purchased in 1726. Nathaniel³ likely continued to live in the old house after the untimely death of his wife and child in 1715 until at least one room in the new house was habitable, at least on the ground floor, while he and Jonathan worked on other rooms in the new house. It is possible that Nathaniel³ remained in the old house for several years after Jonathan³ purchased and moved with his family to his grandfather's house in 1726. When the new house was livable enough, the old homestead may then have been removed from the property. Physical evidence discovered in the west parlor (Rm 112) during the building archaeology phase of the project suggested that the present beam- and post casings, with a *cyma recta* and *cyma reversa* crown molding on the summer beam and girts, and the plastered walls and ceiling, were likely applied in the late 1720s, perhaps prior to or soon after Nathaniel³'s marriage to Abigail Bunce c.1728.

Abigail (Bunce) Parsons (c.1701-1789) and children

Following the death of her husband Nathaniel³ Parsons in 1738, the house and home lot were inherited by widow Abigail (Bunce) Parsons and her three young surviving children, Experience⁴ (b.1729), Elisha⁴ (b.1731), and Nathaniel⁴ (b. 1733). Nathaniel³ Parsons and his brother Jonathan³ inherited their father Jonathan²'s 2 acre house lot, 39³/₄ acres of meadow, and a 4 acre woodlot; Nathaniel³'s landholdings at the time of his death included:

- House and barn and lot, 2 acres - £200-0-0
- A 4 acre home lot - - £160-0-0
- Another home lot - - £30-0-0
- Nook lot in Northampton Meadow, 20 Acres - £560-0-0
- Lower lot in Old Rainbow – 2.5 Acres - £80-0-0
- Upper lot in Rainbow – 3 Acres - £42-0-0
- Lot in the Long Division of Commons – 15 Rods wide - £20-0-0

- Lot in the Long Division of Commons called Lovefield Division
9 Rods wide - £12-0-0

This land was inherited, purchased, and obtained through divisions of common lands granted to residents by the proprietors.

Widow Abigail Parsons paid taxes on the house, house lot, and other lands after her husband's death in 1738 until 1756; after that date taxes on the property were paid by sons and daughter Elisha⁴, Nathaniel⁴, and Experience⁴.¹²

Taxes paid 1739-1759

1739 - Northampton Tax paid by Widow Abigail Parsons

Real Estate:	£72.0.0
Personal Estate:	£9.16.0
Total:	£81.16.0

Feb. 1743 - Northampton Tax paid by Widow Abigail Parsons

Real Estate:	£38.0.5
Personal Estate:	£1.10.0
Total:	£39.15.0

Sept. 1743 - Northampton Tax paid by Widow Abigail Parsons

Real Estate:	£41.0.0
Personal Estate:	£2.6.0
Total:	£43.06.0

1752 - Town and County Tax paid by Widow Abigail

Real Estate:	£0.3.7.4
Personal Estate:	£0.0.4
Poll:	£0.5.1.2
Total:	£0.9.0.3

1752 - Province Tax paid by Widow Abigail

Real Estate:	£0.4.10
Personal Estate:	£0.0.7.2
Poll:	£0.9.4
Total:	£0.14.9.2

1753 - Tax paid by Widow Abigail

Real Estate:	£68.0.0
Personal Estate:	£10.12.0
Poll:	2
Total:	£78.12.0

¹² Tax valuation data for the property was gathered from the extensive Northampton manuscripts collection in the Forbes Library in Northampton Town Papers, 5.7, 5.71

1756 - Enumeration for Elisha⁴ Parsons

1 poll
Hs lot – 2¾ Acres
Meadow - 12¾ Acres
1 horse; 2 oxen; 2 cows; 2 swine

1756 - Enumeration for Nathaniel⁴ Parsons

1 poll
Hs lot – 2¾ Acres
Meadow – 5½ Acres

1759 - Tax paid by Elisha⁴ Parsons

	Town/county	Province
Real Estate:	£7.4.2	£43.5.0
Personal Estate:	£6.0.0	£6.0.0
Total:	£13.4.2	£49.5.0

1759 - Tax paid by Nathaniel⁴ Parsons

Real Estate:	£4.11.8	£27.10.0
Personal Estate:	£4.16.0	£4.16.0
Total:	£9.7.8	£32.6.0

1759 - Tax paid by Experience⁴ Parsons

Real Estate:	£1.10.0	£9.0.0
Personal Estate:	£3.10.4	£5.13.4
Poll:	0	0
Total:	£5.0.4	£14.13.4

The household in 1759 consisted of the following family members:

- Abigail, widow of Nathaniel³, age c.58; mother of her three adult, unmarried or widowed children.
- Daughter Experience⁴ (widowed with infant daughter), aged 30. Experience married in 1754 and moved out of the house; was widowed in 1756 and moved back into the house with her infant daughter. She remarried in 1768 and moved to South Hadley.
- Son Elisha⁴ (unmarried) age 28
- Son Nathaniel⁴ (unmarried) age 26

Nathaniel⁴ married Sarah Rust of Northampton in 1768. Between 1769 and 1782 they had 9 children, 7 of whom survived to adulthood;

1. Nathaniel⁵ 1769-1857, married Sarah King in 1801
2. Luther⁵ 1771-18??, married Hadassah Hannah Brown in 1806
3. Sarah⁵ 1772-1802, married Moses Kingsley in in 1794
4. Abigail⁵ 1774-1849, married Asahel Kingsley 1796
5. Mary⁵ 1776-1857, married Preserved Bartlett in 1794
6. Persis⁵ 1778-1810, married Phineas Sexton in 1809

7. Twin 1781-1781
8. Twin 1781-1781
9. Eunice⁵ 1782-1863, married Joel Brown in 1806

Elisha⁴ married Lucy Alvord of Northampton in 1770, and continued to reside in the Parsons House with his family until 1777, during which time 3 children were born. By 1777 the house was occupied by 5 adults and 9 children.

Taxes paid 1776-1801

1776 - Tax paid by Elisha⁴ Parsons
Real Estate: £40-0-0

1776 - Tax paid by Nathaniel⁴ Parsons
Real Estate: £36-10-0

1786 - Tax paid by Nathaniel⁴ Parsons
Real Estate: £36-10-0

1791 - Tax paid by Nathaniel⁴ Parsons
Real Estate: £7-15-0

1801 - Tax paid by Nathaniel⁴ Parsons and Nathaniel⁵ Parsons
Real Estate: \$26.00

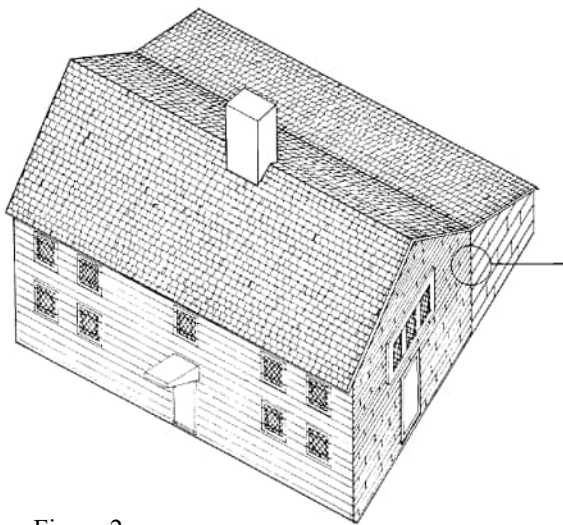


Figure 2.
1992 SPNEA conjectural reconstruction of the appearance of the house in the mid 18th century after erection of the full rear lean-to. (Clancey and Leeke, 1993.)

It has been postulated in the 1992 SPNEA study that the one-story rear lean-to was built during the middle decades of the 18th century to accommodate the multiple generations and multiple households which occupied the house during this period (Figure 2).¹³

Unfortunately, no reliable dendrochronology dates were obtained from surviving timbers of the saltbox-form rear lean-to. This left many unanswered questions about the date of construction and extent of the lean-to. Was there an earlier, smaller rear lean-to prior to the lean-to which extended across the entire rear wall of the house? When was the rear larger lean-to constructed? What was the form of the Phase 1 chimney? How many fireplaces and bake ovens did it contain?

¹³ Conjectural drawing of the Parsons House, "Addition of the Lean-to, Mid-eighteenth Century". (Clancey and Leeke, 1992.)

The demographic data regarding the family during the third quarter of the 18th century does indicate that the house was occupied by a fairly large number of people, and for a decade or two, it could be said that multiple nuclear family households occupied the house. In 1759 Nathaniel³ Parsons' widow Abigail resided in the house with her two unmarried sons Elisha⁴ (age 28) and Nathaniel⁴ (age 26), and with her widowed daughter Experience⁴ (age 30) and her infant daughter. In 1768 Nathaniel⁴ married Sarah Rust, and over the next thirteen years nine children were born to the couple, seven of whom survived to adulthood. Also in 1768, daughter Experience⁴ remarried and left the household along with her daughter to live in South Hadley with her new husband, Deacon David Nash. Son Elisha⁴ (age 39) married in 1770 to Lucy Alford, and he and his new family remained as residents of the house until 1777; during this time three of their five children were born in the Parsons house. At its peak in 1777, the house contained widow Abigail; son Elisha⁴ and his wife and three infant children; and son Nathaniel⁴ and his wife and six children ranging in age from newborn to nine years of age, for a total of five adults and nine children under the age of nine.

This demographic and the SPNEA team's interpretation of the surviving finishes in the ground-floor rooms of the rear pile as dating to the third quarter of the 18th century led them to assign the construction of the full rear lean-to c.1770. This interpretation explained the presence of a chimney mass with two kitchen fireplaces and two bake ovens, as it was often common practice (but certainly not the rule) in the 18th century for households containing two- or more nuclear family units spanning two generations of household heads to create separate functioning kitchens. Moreover, the extraordinary width of the pine lapped- and feather-edged boards applied to the interior walls of the lean-to – some as much as 30 inches in width, and fastened with wrought nails - suggested an 18th century date of erection, or at least finishing of the interior of the lean-to.

However, the evidence discovered during this study strongly suggests that the existing chimney and fireplaces along with their two bake ovens were not erected c.1770, but during the Federal period improvements c.1810-1820 during which the original c.1719 chimney was replaced. Moreover, the configuration of the two bake ovens in the new chimney - situated outside the large kitchen fireboxes - was a form that only gained wide popularity in the final decades of the 18th century and opening decades of the 19th century. It should also be noted that both the 1992 and present investigations came to the conclusion that the walls and ceilings of the two second floor chambers of the house (Rms 202/203 and 210) remained unplastered until the early 19th century.

The data presented in the 1798 U.S. Direct Tax enumeration for the Parsons House presents very strong evidence which supports the conclusion that by the end of the 18th century the Parsons House was a very modest and old-fashioned dwelling house¹⁴. The assessed value of the two-story wood house was \$250, among the lowest values of all houses in Northampton. The house

¹⁴ 1798 Direct Tax data for Northampton is found in the Sylvester Judd Manuscript in the Forbes Library collections, accessed in digital format at <https://archive.org/details/juddmanuscriptnojud0>. For a summary of the data for Northampton dwellings and comparison with Parsons House data, see Appendix 2.

was listed as having only seven windows containing 56 square feet of glass. The area of the house's footprint was listed as 1000 square feet. But actual area of the house (40 feet x 20 feet = 800 square feet) and the full rear lean-to (10 feet x 40 feet = 400 square feet) would have actually totaled 1200 square feet. The 1000 square foot size suggests that a smaller rear lean-to, measuring approximately 10 ft. x 20 feet was present, as suggested by surviving framing evidence on the rear plate of the Phase 1 house. If we understand the 1798 Direct Tax data for the Parsons House as an accurate enumeration of the its size and number of windows, it means that the house did not undergo its major Federal period remodeling and improvements – which included the rebuilding of the chimney with the two kitchen fireplaces with bake ovens outside the fireboxes - until sometime after 1798.

The following discussion explores the Parsons family land transactions in the period between the mid 1780s and c.1810 - a period of economic difficulties experienced by most Massachusetts farmers, craftsmen, and traders during and after the Revolutionary War, especially in rural central and western Massachusetts. This record offers support to the conclusion that it was unlikely that the Parsons family member who occupied the house during this period had the resources to carry out significant improvements to the house. Instead, together with the physical evidence, it offers strong support to the conclusion that the extensive improvements to the house which added the full rear lean-to, rebuilt the chimney, raised the rear pile of the house to two stories, added several ells and wings, and remodeled the interior and exterior of the house, were undertaken by the next set of owners of the property, the Wright family, after their purchase of the property in 1807-1808.

On March 23, 1785, Nathaniel⁴ Parsons sold a portion of the northern half of his home lot to Luke Lyman, joiner of Northampton, for £46-0-6.¹⁵ Three years later on 5 March 1788 Nathaniel⁴ Parsons mortgaged a parcel of land in the Northampton Common Fields called Old Rainbow to Caleb Strong of Northampton, Esquire, for £28-15-6. The parcel was Nathaniel's share of a lot he inherited from his father and owned in common with his older brother Elisha⁴; the lot was then being improved by their mother Abigail Parsons as her dower right of thirds.¹⁶ The mortgage was not paid off and discharged until 19 March 1808, five months after Nathaniel⁴'s death. This was the same date that Nathaniel⁴'s son Luther⁵ sold to Solomon Wright for \$100 1.5 acres of land in the Northampton Commons called Old Rainbow, another lot inherited from Nathaniel³.¹⁷

On 12 January 1789 Nathaniel⁴ Parsons mortgaged “the homestead where I now live with the dwelling house, one-half of a barn, and other buildings” to Luke Lyman, joiner of Northampton, for £72-7-3.¹⁸ The condition of the mortgage required Nathaniel⁴ to pay the sum of £72-7-3 with interest within four years. The amount owed was not paid and the mortgage was not discharged

¹⁵ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 5, p. 337, executed 23 March 1785, recorded 18 January 1793. This was the lot on which the parsonage of the Congregational Church stood in the early 19th century.

¹⁶ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 2, p. 113, executed 5 March 1788, recorded 5 March 1788. The condition of the mortgage was that Nathaniel was to pay the full sum of £28-15-6 in silver money with interest within one year.

¹⁷ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 27, p. 420, 19 March 1808, recorded 21 March 1808.

¹⁸ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 6, p. 133, executed 12 January 1789, recorded 18 January 1793.

until 6 July 1796 – two days after Nathaniel⁴ sold the remainder of his house and barn and homestead to his sons Nathaniel⁵ and Luther⁵ for £60-0-0.¹⁹

Three months after mortgaging his house and home lot to Luke Lyman, Nathaniel⁴ Parsons mortgaged a 2-acre parcel of land in the Walnut Tree Division to Katharine Clap, singlewoman of Northampton, for £12-14-8. This sum was to be paid back in two years with interest. However, no discharge of this mortgage was recorded.²⁰

On February 5, 1790 Nathaniel⁴ Parsons mortgaged to Daniel Edwards of Northampton for £10-8-10 a parcel of land in the Meadow or Commonfield in Northampton at a place called the Nook containing 2.5 acres. The sum was to be paid back with interest by March 31, 1792. No discharge of the mortgage was recorded. This parcel was another inherited by Nathaniel⁴ from his father Nathaniel³ after his death in 1738.²¹

Nathaniel⁴ Parsons sold a parcel of land on the northeast end of his home lot to Seth Russell, cordwainer, of Northampton on 1 June 1796 for \$300. This parcel was situated between the home lot earlier sold to Luke Lyman in 1785 and Nathaniel⁴'s home-lot. The lot measured 5 Rods and 10 feet in width and about 12 Rods in length, excepting the barn standing on the land which Nathaniel⁴ reserved out of the conveyance. For the sum of \$20 Abigail Parsons relinquished her right of dower to the property.²²

One month later, on July 4, 1796, Nathaniel⁴ Parsons sold to his sons Nathaniel⁵ and Luther⁵ for £60-0-0 “the remainder of my house and homestead which I have not sold to Capt. Hezekiah Russell together with my barn.”²³

No land transactions involving Nathaniel⁴ Parsons or his sons Nathaniel⁵ and Luther⁵ occurred over the next six years. Between 1802 and 1804 Luther⁵ Parsons made three purchases of agricultural land, suggesting that somewhat better times may have returned and that he was reacquiring some parcels which were sold in the past, or at least in the same meadows and fields as the lands which his grandfather Nathaniel³ had acquired and passed to his sons. On 3 April 1802 Luther⁵ purchased for \$75 from neighbor Asahel Wright, yeoman of Northampton, a 2.5 acre parcel of land in the Northampton Meadow commonly called the Walnut Trees.²⁴ On 22 August 1804 Luther⁵ purchased for \$110, again from neighbor Asahel Wright and Israel Wright,

¹⁹ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 11, p. 286, executed 4 July 1796, recorded 4 July 1796.

²⁰ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 2, p. 320, executed 9 April 1789, recorded 9 April 1789.

²¹ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 2, p. 495, executed 5 February 1790, recorded 5 February 1790.

²² Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 11, p. 285, executed 1 June 1796, recorded 2 July 1796.

²³ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 11, p. 286, executed 4 July 1796, recorded 4 July 1796. It is odd that this deed listed Col. Hezekiah Russell as the person to whom Nathaniel⁴ Parsons sold a part of his homestead; the deed dated 1 June 1796 named Seth Russell as the grantee. Seth was the son of Col. Hezekiah Russell. Seth Russell was married on 6 October 1794 to Polly Emerson.

²⁴ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 19, p. 375, executed 3 April 1802, recorded 3 April 1802.

yeomen of Northampton, a piece of land in in that part of the common fields in Northampton called the Nook containing 2 acres 3 Roods 34 Rods.²⁵ On 7 November 1804 Luther⁵ purchased for \$42 from his uncle Elisha⁴ Parsons a 3.5 acre parcel of land in that part of Northampton commonly called Sandy Hill. This was part of the pasture which Elisha⁴ and his brother Nathaniel⁴ had inherited from their father and which they formerly owned in common and undivided, but lately divided.²⁶

These purchases of agricultural land may have signaled a desire by Luther⁵ to continue farming in Northampton on his own. However, on 22 January 1807, eight months after his marriage and 10 months before his widowed father's death - Luther⁵ Parsons sold his "one half of the homestead in said Northampton on which I now live with one half the buildings thereon being in common and undivided" to his cousin Seth Rust, joiner of Northampton, for \$300. At the time of the sale Luther⁵ resided in the old homestead with his pregnant wife of nine months, his brother Nathaniel⁵ and his wife and infant daughter, and his 74-year-old widowed father, Nathaniel⁴. His mother had died on 23 June 1806 at the age of 67.²⁷

On 27 February 1807 - one month after selling his interest in the Parsons House and property - Luther⁵ Parsons sold to Isaac W. Tower, yeoman of Northampton, for \$300 a small parcel of land with buildings in Northampton which he had purchased from Seth Rust. It is not clear whether he resided on this land or if it was agricultural land. The deed for the sale of this land by Rust to Luther⁵ Parsons could not be found.²⁸

On 21 March 1807 Seth Rust sold to Ralph Huntington, gentleman of Northampton, for \$500 the one-half interest in the Parsons homestead which he had purchased from Luther⁵ Parsons for \$300 two months earlier. The property was described as "one half of the homestead in Northampton on which Nathaniel Parsons now lives being in common and undivided with the said Nathaniel together with one half of the buildings thereon standing, bounded Southeast on the County Road, Northeast on Charles Chapman's land, Northwest on land belonging to the heirs of Josiah Parsons, Southwest by land lately owned by Thomas Levake containing in the whole one acre..." From this deed it appears that Luther and his family were no longer residing in the house.²⁹ This same one-half interest in the Parsons homestead was sold by Ralph Huntington to Joseph Lyman of Northampton, Esquire, for \$500 on 22 April 1807. Lyman in turn sold this one-half interest in the Parsons homestead to Chloe Wright, wife of Daniel Wright, for \$320 on 27 April 1807. At the time of this sale Nathaniel⁵ and his family and his father

²⁵ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 22, p. 281, executed 22 August 1804, recorded 24 August 1804. The deed was witnessed by Daniel Wright, Justice of the Peace.

²⁶ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 22, p. 381, executed 7 November 1804, recorded 22 November 1804. The deed was witnessed by Daniel Wright, Justice of the Peace.

²⁷ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 25, p. 389, executed 22 January 1807, recorded 23 January 1807. The deed was witnessed by Daniel Wright, Justice of the Peace.

²⁸ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 25, p. 507 executed 27 February 1807, recorded 30 April 1807.

²⁹ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 25, p. 506 executed 21 March 1807, recorded 21 March 1807.

Nathaniel⁴ were all still living in the Parsons House. The elder Nathaniel⁵ Parsons died on 13 November 1807 at the age of 74.

On 18 May 1807 Luther⁵ Parsons resumed selling his agricultural land. He sold to Henry Clark, yeoman of Northampton, for \$110 the land he had purchased in 1804 from Asahel Wright and Israel Wright for the same price. This parcel was located in the common field called the Nook.³⁰ On 8 January 1808 Luther⁵ Parsons sold for \$150 a piece of pasture land in Northampton at a place called Sandy Hill to Nathan Storrs, watchmaker of Northampton.³¹ This was followed on 19 March 1808 when Luther⁵ Parsons sold to Solomon Wright of Northampton for \$100 a piece of land in Northampton Common field at Old Rainbow containing 1.5 acres. This lot was “lately owned by my father Nathaniel⁴ Parsons”.³²

The following month, on 8 April 1808, Luther⁵ Parsons sold to Nathan Storrs for \$200 the “homestead whereon I now live with all the buildings containing two acres”. This apparently was a house and land he purchased after selling his one-half interest in the old Parsons homestead.³³

Six weeks later, on 24 May 1808, Luther⁵ Parsons, still identified as being of Northampton (perhaps he and his family continued to reside in the house he sold to Nathan Storrs the previous month), sold for \$29 to Israel Wright of Northampton, Trader, a 5-acre parcel of land at a place called Halfway Brook. The “whole lot containing about five acres being in common and undivided with my brother Nathaniel Parsons, the whole of my right being one half of said lot hereby conveyed. Also, one other piece called Fortification Hill ... containing four acres being in common and undivided with my brother Nathaniel Parsons and one half of said lot being the whole of my right therein is hereby conveyed.” The sale of these parcels represented Luther⁵ Parsons’ disengagement from Northampton.³⁴

Nathaniel⁵ Parsons sold his one-half interest in the Parsons homestead to Horace Graves of Northampton, Printer, on 6 May 1808 for \$450, more than 15 months after his brother Luther⁵ sold his share of the property and moved out and six months after his father died. His brother Luther’s share had been sold by Joseph Lyman to Chloe Wright on 22 April 1807, although the

³⁰ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 27, p. 17 executed 18 May 1807, recorded 23 May 1807. The deed was witnessed by Daniel Wright, Justice of the Peace.

³¹ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 27, p. 328 executed 8 January 1808, recorded 18 January 1808.

³² Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 27, p. 420, executed 19 March 1808, recorded 21 March 1808.

³³ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 27, p. 458, executed 8 April 1808, recorded 11 April 1808.

³⁴ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 27, p. 524, executed 24 May 1808, recorded 24 May 1808. The deed was witnessed by Justice of the Peace Daniel Wright. In the Parsons Family genealogy, compiler Gerald James Parsons cited an entry in Sylvester Judd’s Manuscript (Vol. 4:398) that by 1810 Luther and his family were living in Chesterfield, MA, and later moved to Steuben County, NY, but in his research he could find no references to Luther Parsons in the indexes to the 1820 U.S. Census. *The Parsons Family, Volume 1, The English Ancestry and Descendants to the Sixth Generation of Cornet Joseph Parsons (1620-1683)*, compiled by Gerald James Parsons (Baltimore: Gateway Press, 2002), pp. 709.

deed of sale to Graves stated that Nathaniel owned the property in common and undivided with Joseph Lyman. By this date occupants of the house were only Nathaniel⁵ and his wife Martha (age 41) and daughter Sarah (age 3).³⁵

On the very same day – 6 May 1808 – Horace Graves sold to Nathaniel⁵ Parsons for \$500 “...a certain tract or piece of land lying and being in that part of Northampton aforesaid which is commonly called and known by the name of Lickinwater Street bounded ...Westerly by the County Road, Northerly by land belonging to Jonathan Huntington partly and partly by land of Charles Starkweather, Easterly by the old river place so called, and Southerly by land now owned by Elihu Clap, containing five acres and a half...”³⁶ Graves had purchased the house and land a year earlier from Eliakim Clap, gentleman of Chester, for \$450.³⁷ Graves mortgaged the property with Clap for \$375 for the property, payable in three years. With the sale of the land and house to Nathaniel⁵ Parsons Graves was able to pay off the mortgage in one year.³⁸

On 12 August 1808 Nathaniel⁵ Parsons sold to Charles Starkweather, yeoman, of Northampton, for \$106 “a certain piece of land in that part of the Common field in Northampton called Old Rainbow...the land is held in common and undivided with Solomon Wright the one half of which being the whole of my part is hereby conveyed containing one acre and a half...”³⁹

On 10 September 1808 Horace Graves of Northampton, printer, sold to Ferdinand H. Wright, Gentleman of Northampton, for \$400 “...that part of the homestead I purchased of Nathaniel Parsons and the same on which I now live and is one half of the whole being in common and undivided with Joseph Lyman, Esquire and is bounded Southeasterly on the County Road, Northeasterly by Major Charles Chapman, Northwesterly on land of the heirs of Josiah Parsons, deceased, partly and partly on land of Josiah Parsons, and Southwesterly on Thomas Levake’s land, the whole lot containing one half acre more or less with one half of all the buildings thereon standing.”⁴⁰ It is clear from the deed that Horace Graves resided in the Parsons house at

³⁵ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 27, p. 513, executed 6 May 1808, recorded 7 May 1808. The deed was witnessed by Justice of the Peace Daniel Wright. The fact that Nathaniel⁵ and his family continued to live in the Parsons house after his brother Luther⁵ sold his share of the property and moved out with his family suggests that some significant differences arose between the two brothers, resulting in the complete rupture of their familial and economic connections.

³⁶ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 27, p. 514, executed 6 May 1808, recorded 7 May 1808. The deed was witnessed by Justice of the Peace Daniel Wright.

³⁷ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 27 p. 132, executed 30 April 1807, recorded 30 April 1807. The deed was witnessed by Justice of the Peace Daniel Wright.

³⁸ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 25, p. 583, executed 1 May 1807, recorded 1 May 1807. The deed was witnessed by Justice of the Peace Daniel Wright. The mortgage was discharged on May 7, 1808.

³⁹ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 27, p. 640, executed 12 August 1808, recorded 7 October 1808. The deed was witnessed by Justice of the Peace Daniel Wright.

⁴⁰ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 27, p. 609, executed 10 September 1808, recorded 10 September 1808. The deed was witnessed by Justice of the Peace Daniel Wright.

the time of the sale, likely occupying the house soon after his purchase from Nathaniel Parsons on 6 May 1808.

With the above transaction the house came fully into the possession of members of the Wright family. Ownership of the property remained formally under Chloe Wright, who owned one half interest, and her stepson Ferdinand Hunt Wright, who also held one half interest. However, until 1824, when Chloe's Wright's husband and Ferdinand H. Wright's father died, tax valuations did not reflect the half ownership in common and undivided in the property which each held, but listed the property under Daniel Wright as head of household, even though he did not legally have any ownership claim. Undoubtedly this arrangement of ownership was first initiated at the purchases of the property by Wright family members so that this real estate would not be in Daniel's name and thus could not be attached or taken by his several creditors. The ownership and transfer of the property continued through several generations along the two lines of descent from Chloe Wright and Ferdinand H. Hunt until finally merging in the ownership of sisters Anna Wright and Mary Caroline (Wright) Bliss, daughters of Ferdinand H. and Olive Wright after the death of Fanny Wright, daughter of Chloe and Daniel Wright, in 1869.

C. Chronology of Wright and Bliss Family Ownership – 1807 - 1941

1. **22 April 1807 - Ralph Huntington sold to Joseph Lyman, Esq., of Northampton for \$500 the one-half interest in the Parsons house and land which he purchased from Seth Rust (HCLR, Vol. 26, p. 46), who purchased it from Luther Parsons (HCLR, Vol. 25, pp. 389).**
2. **27 April 1807 - Joseph Lyman, Esquire, sold for \$320. to Chloe (Lyman) Wright, wife of Daniel Wright, Esquire, “one half of the home estate in said Northampton on which Nathaniel Parsons now lives** being in common and undivided with the said Nathaniel, together with one half the buildings thereon standing, bounded southeast on the County Road, northeast on Charles Chapman’s land, northwest on land belonging to the heirs of Josiah Parsons, southwest by land lately owned by Thomas Levake, containing in the whole one acre more or less being the same homestead which Luther Parsons conveyed to Seth Rust and the said Seth Rust to Ralph Huntington and the said Ralph Huntington to me.” (Parsons, *The Parsons Family*, p. 396; Hampshire Co. Deeds, Vol. 56, p. 537, executed 27 April 1807, recorded 1 January 1827). It is unclear why Cloe Wright waited to record the deed at the Hampshire County Registry of Deeds until three years after the death of her husband.
3. **10 September 1808 – Horace Graves sold to Ferdinand Hunt Wright, son of Daniel Wright “a certain piece of land in sd Northampton being that part of the homestead I purchased of Nathaniel⁵ Parsons and the same on which I now live and is one half of the whole being in common and undivided with Joseph Lyman Esqr., and is bounded southeasterly on the County Road, northeasterly by Major Charles Chapmans, northwesterly on the heirs of Josiah Parsons deceased partly and partly on Josiah Parsons, and southwesterly on Thomas Lavake’s land the whole lot containing ½ acre more or less with one half of all buildings thereon standing”. (HCLR, Vol. 27, p. 609, executed 10 September 1808, recorded 10 September 1808). Ferdinand Hunt Wright was 24 years old when he purchased one-half interest in the Parsons property. Three years later he married Olive Ames; between 1816 and 1824 three daughters were born.**
4. **26 December 1824 - Daniel Wright (1755-1824) died.**
No will or probate records were found for Daniel Wright. He did not own any real estate at the time of his death.
5. **25 April 1828 – Horace Lyman of Northampton, yeoman, sold for \$200 to Ferdinand H. Wright of Northampton, Esquire, “a tract or parcel of land situated in said Northampton ...bounded...westerly on land of the heirs of Elisha Graves deceased, northerly on lands formerly owned by Perez Clark, easterly on Josiah Parsons and the grantor, and southerly on lands of the grantee and lands supposed to be owned by Asahel Pomeroy and land of the grantor containing by estimation 80 rods...reserving however from this deed a right of way over and across the same as has heretofore been enjoyed and as is mentioned in Josiah Parsons deed to Luke Lyman and Sylvester Lyman dated May 4, 1815” . For Josiah Parsons’ 1815 deed to Luke and Sylvester Lyman see deed above dated 4 May 1815. (HCLR, Vol.59, pp. 453, executed 25 April 1828, recorded 25 April 1828).**

The 1830 U.S. Census suggests that widow Chloe Wright was living in the same house and household as step-son Ferdinand Hunt Wright and his family. However, separate household and house entries for Chloe Wright and Ferdinand Hunt Wright in the 1840 U.S. Census suggest that by this date Chloe Wright was living separately from Ferdinand and family.

- 6. 1842 - Ferdinand Hunt Wright died, intestate.** The house and one acre of land were valued at \$600, “with another lot situated at the north corner of the home lot containing one-half acre, more or less, encumbered with the right of a carriage way through the same” (see HCLR, Vol. 59, p. 453, executed 25 April 1828, recorded 25 April 1828, Horace Lyman to Ferdinand H. Wright).

The house and land were owned in common and undivided with his step-mother, Chloe Wright, each owning one-half interest. Ferdinand Hunt Wright’s widow Olive (Ames) Wright and her two surviving daughters, Anna and Mary, and an orphaned child of deceased daughter Elizabeth (Wright) Adams, inherited Ferdinand’s half interest in the house and property after his death. (Hampshire County Probate Records. Letter of Administration on estate of Ferdinand H. Wright, intestate, granted to Olive A. Wright, widow, 6 December 1842, Vol. 17, p. 294.) Olive Wright continued to live in the house with her daughters; on February 7, 1848 her youngest daughter, Mary, was married in the Parsons House to Theodore Bliss. Bliss was the ninth and youngest child of William and Martha⁵ (Parsons) Bliss. Martha was a fifth-generation descendant of Cornet Joseph¹ Parsons, and the marriage united the Wright and Parsons families, allowing the property to be “returned” to the Parsons family history.⁴¹

In 1850 the house was again occupied by Chloe Wright (age 86) and her widowed daughter Fanny Wright (age 50) along with a family of boarders: George Sargeant, merchant, age 30; his wife Lydia A., age 27, and 2 daughters 1 and 2 years old; and a servant, Margaret, age 21 (no last name given). After her daughter’s marriage to Theodore Bliss, Olive Wright, the widow of Ferdinand Hunt Wright, had moved to New Hampshire to live with her sister. The Sergeant family continued to board in the former Parsons/Wright house at least until 1863.

- 7. 10 January 1854 - Chloe Wright died, aged 88, of “old age”.**⁴² Her one-half interest in the property passed to her one surviving daughter Fanny Wright. No probate records have been found.

The 1860 U.S. Census for Northampton listed a Fannie Wright, age 60, living in Northampton in the household of A. H. Hunt, gentleman, born in Ireland, and his wife Sarah W. It is unclear if this was Chloe Wright’s daughter, Fannie, but the age is more or less correct. Fannie may have been working as a domestic in the household of the Hunts.

⁴¹ Parsons, *Descendants of Cornet Joseph Parsons*, pp. 620-21; Nancy Rexford, “History of Parsons House Residents”, 2015, Mss., Historic Northampton Archives.

8. **14 July 1869 - Fanny Wright, daughter of Chloe and Daniel Wright, died of apoplexy at the age of 77 years, 5 months.** She left her half-interest in the property to her step-niece, Anna Wright, daughter of Olive Wright and Ferdinand Hunt Wright. (Fannie Wright Probate File Papers Hampshire Box 266, Vol.57-59, 1868-1876; will – p. 257-258, written 14 June 1865.
9. **7 June 1872 – Olive A. Wright of Northampton, Anna Wright of Northampton, Mary C. Bliss of Philadelphia, PA, L.F. Adams of LaSalle, LaSalle County, Illinois, only heirs at law of Ferdinand H. Wright, sold for \$400 to Susan L.B. Shepherd of Northampton, wife of Henry Shepherd a parcel of land situate near Bridge St. containing 80 Rods more or less,** being the same premises conveyed to Ferdinand H. Wright by Horace Lyman by deed dated 25 April 1828, recorded in New Hampshire Deeds Book 59, p. 453. In 1870 Anna Wright was living in Philadelphia with her sister Mary C. Bliss and her family; by 1872, the date of this deed, she was a resident of Northampton. The document also listed Olive A. Wright, widow of Ferdinand H. Wright and mother of Anna Wright and Mary C. Bliss as being “of Northampton”.

The 1880 U. S. Census listed Olive Wright (age 87) and described her as “mother” residing in the house in Northampton with Anna Wright, age 55, described as “keeping house”. Anna’s actual age was 57. Olive Wright and her unmarried daughter Anna continued to reside in the Parsons House until their deaths in 1889 (Olive) and 1909 (Anna). (1880 U. S. Census, Northampton, dwelling house #359, family # 425.)

10. **10 June 1889 – Olive A. Wright of Northampton died of senile decay, age 96, intestate.** Her daughter Anna Wright petitioned to serve as administratrix of the estate and was granted that role in 1889. Olive Wright’s interest in the property passed upon her death to her one surviving daughter, Anna Wright, who had inherited Fanny Wright’s share of the property upon Fanny’s death in 1869. (Massachusetts Death Records, 1841-1915; 1889, Hampshire County, Northampton, p. 24. Olive A. Wright, intestate, Case #2564, Box 277-14:2; Vol. 73, p. 111.) The only next of kin listed were Anna Wright, a daughter; Mary C. Bliss, a daughter and wife of Theodore Bliss of Philadelphia, PA; and Ferdinand L. Adams, son of Elizabeth C. Adams (deceased) and Levi Adams of Indianapolis, IA (F.L. Adams was a grandson of Olive Wright). 1880 U. S. Census, Northampton, dwelling house #359, family # 425.

The 1900 U.S. Census for Northampton listed Anna Wright as head of household and owner of the property; Lavinia Nelson was listed as a “companion”, age 60, single. Also living in the house were Calvin B. and Harriet Kingsley, husband and wife, ages 60 and 55, renters; Calvin Kingsley was listed as a Talley Man at the Freight Depot. Also residing in the house was a boarder, Francis G. Breckenridge, age 29, born in Ireland, and working as a telegraph operator.

11. **26 June 1909 - Anna Wright died in Northampton, aged 92.** The nearest living relatives of Anna Wright were Theodore Bliss of Philadelphia, her brother-in-law, and his children, Miss Anna Bliss and Dr Arthur Bliss of Philadelphia and Edgar Bliss of Springfield, and a grandniece and grandnephew, Eleanor and Constant Southworth of Springfield, children of the late Mr. and Mrs. Charles H. Southworth. In her will she left the house and property to

niece Anna Catherine Bliss of Philadelphia and nephews Arthur Bliss of Philadelphia and Edgar Bliss of Springfield. (Anna Wright Obituary, Springfield Republican, Sunday, 27 June 1909, p.7.)

Anna Catherine Bliss took up residence in the house by 1910 as indicated in the 1910 U. S. Census for Northampton, which listed for dwelling house # 58 (Bridge St) and family # 5 the following occupants:

- Anna Barrett, Head, age 37, widow, born in Iowa, her parents born in Ireland, housekeeper, at home, boards, renter;
- her daughter Gladys M. Barrett, age 14, single, born in Massachusetts, attends school;
- Clarence E. Park, age 31, single, lodger, born in Vermont, works as a Clerk in the Freight Office;
- Jane Drew, age 37, single, a boarder, born in Connecticut, works as a Clerk in the Telegraph Office;
- Anna C. Bliss, age 50, single, head of household, born in Philadelphia, PA, owner.

The 1920 U.S. Census listed the following occupants of the house:

- Anna Catherine Bliss, age 71, single, head of household, no occupation;
- Anna Q. Barrett, age 47, worked as a servant in a private family, widow, born in Iowa, parents born in Ireland;
- Gladys A. Barrett, age 22, daughter, single, worked as a saleswoman in a dry goods store, b. MA.

The 1930 U. S. Census listed the following occupants of the house:

- Anna Catherine Bliss, age 82, single, head of household, real estate valued at \$8000, no occupation;
- Blanche D. Nordvi, age 62, widow, servant in a private family, born in Illinois.

The 1940 U. S. Census listed the following occupants of the house:

- Anna Bliss, 91, Head of Household, white, female, single, b. in Pennsylvania
- Abbie Lange, 58, Companion, white, female, widow, b. Maine,
- Frances Payner (or Gayner?), 44, Housekeeper, white, female, divorced, b. Massachusetts.

Anna Catherine Bliss continued to reside in the house until her death on 16 January 1941.

12. 16 January 1941 – Anna Catherine Bliss died. She left the house and property to the Northampton Historical Society. Her brother Edgar Bliss of Springfield had signed over to Anna Catherine Bliss his one-third interest in the property in 1940; brother Arthur Ames Bliss had done so some time before 1940. (Will of Anna Catherine Bliss, Hampshire County Case 23971, Box 580, File 13, February 18, 1941.)

D. Discussion of the Wright and Bliss Family Ownership, 1807-1941

Members of the Wright family and their descendants owned part or all of the Nathaniel³ Parsons house from 1807 until 1941 when the property was bequeathed to the Northampton Historical Society through the will of Anna Catherine Bliss (1848 -1941), a descendant of both the Wright family and the Parsons family through her grandmother Martha (Parsons) Bliss, a fifth-generation descendant of Cornet Joseph Parsons. Martha⁵ Parsons (1779-1834) married in 1798 in Northampton to William Bliss of Belchertown, Massachusetts. Their youngest child, Theodore (1822-1910) married Mary C. Wright, a daughter of Ferdinand Hunt and Olive A. Wright, in the Parsons House in Northampton on February 7, 1848.⁴³

A one-half interest in the Parsons House property was first purchased by Chloe (Lyman) Wright (1767-1854) of Northampton, the wife of Daniel Wright, Esquire (1755-1824), on 27 April 1807, from Joseph Lyman, Esquire, of Northampton. The deed to Chloe Wright from Joseph Lyman described the property as

...one half of the home estate in said Northampton on which Nathaniel Parsons⁵ now lives being in common and undivided with the said Nathaniel⁵, together with one half the buildings thereon standing – bounded Southeast on the County Road, Northeast on Charles Chapmans land - Northwest on land belonging to the heirs of Josiah Parsons – Southwest by land lately owned by Thomas Lavake - containing in the whole one acre - be the same more or less – being the same homestead which Luther⁵ Parsons conveyed to Seth Rust and the said Seth Rust to Ralph Huntington and the said Ralph Huntington to me [Joseph Lyman].⁴⁴

⁴³ Parsons, *The Parsons Family*, pp.620-621.

⁴⁴ Joseph Lyman to Chloe Wright, for \$320, Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 56, p. 537, executed 27 April 1807, recorded 1 January 1827. It has not yet been determined whether or how Chloe (Lyman)Wright was related to Joseph Lyman. Chloe (Lyman) Wright was Daniel Wright's second wife. They married in 1794, and had 3 daughters, only one of which survived to adulthood, Fanny (1794-1869). Daniel and first wife Roxana (1762-1791) had three children: two daughters and a son, Ferdinand Hunt Wright, the only one to survive to adulthood. Seth Rust of Northampton, a joiner, who purchased one-half of the homestead from Luther⁵ Parsons on 22 January 1807 for \$300, was a cousin to Nathaniel⁵ and Luther⁵ Parsons, as Seth's father Israel was brother to Sarah (Rust) Parsons, wife of Nathaniel⁴ and mother of Nathaniel⁵ and Luther⁵ Parsons. Seth Rust in turn sold the property to Ralph Huntington of Northampton, Gentleman, for \$500 on 21 March 1807; Huntington sold the same to Joseph Lyman for \$500 on 22 April 1807, who five days later sold the property for \$320 – one half of the homestead with buildings – to Chloe Wright. Joseph Lyman was variously identified as Joseph Lyman and as Joseph Lyman, Jr. It should be noted that in 1799 Daniel Wright of Northampton, Esquire, mortgaged for \$500 received from Joseph Lyman, Jr., Esquire, of Northampton his "home estate in said Northampton bounded northwesterly on the road from Northampton to Hadley, northeasterly on Aaron Wright's estate, southeast on Samuel Clarks home lot, southwest on Warham Parsons estate with the dwelling house and buildings on the same standing containing by estimation one acre" (see Figure 3). Daniel Wright was unable to discharge this mortgage debt to Joseph Lyman. It appears that Lyman allowed Daniel and his family to reside in the mortgaged house for the next eight or nine years, when in 1807 and 1808 he facilitated the purchase of the former Parsons homestead by Daniel's wife Chloe and son Ferdinand Hunt Wright. The reader is referred to Sections A, B, C, and D of the "History of Ownership and Occupation" for specific dates and citations of the subsequent land transactions discussed in this section but not indicated by footnote references.

As described in the above deed, the property came into Joseph Lyman's ownership in a purchase from Ralph Huntington of Northampton, Gentleman, for \$500 on 22 April 1807; Huntington had purchased the property from Seth Rust, joiner, of Northampton, for \$500 on 21 March 1807; and Seth Rust purchased the property from Luther⁵ Parsons on 22 January 1807 for \$300. At the time of Luther⁵'s sale to Rust both he and brother Nathaniel⁵ were living in the house with their wives and young children, and their widowed father. Nathaniel⁵ married in 1801, and a second time in November 1805 after the death of his first wife in February 1805, one month after she gave birth to a daughter. Luther⁵ married 11 April 1806, and a daughter was born sometime in 1807. Nathaniel's and Luther's mother Abigail had died 23 June 1806; father Nathaniel died on 13 November 1807. Thus, at the time of Chloe Wright's purchase of the property on 27 April 1807 from Joseph Lyman, only the elder widowed Nathaniel⁴ and his married son Nathaniel⁵ with wife and young child were living in the house; it is unlikely that Luther⁵ and his wife and infant child were still there. On 8 April 1808 Luther⁵ sold for \$200 "the homestead whereon I now live" on two acres of land to Nathan Storrs of Northampton, watchmaker. From the description of the property in the deed, it clearly was not the Parsons House or on abutting land, so it must be concluded that he was gone from the Parsons house and living elsewhere by the time of his sale to Storrs of the "the homestead whereon I now live". It is not clear when Luther purchased this land, as no entry in the Hampshire County Deeds could be found for Luther Parsons purchasing this property.

Luther's brother Nathaniel⁵ sold his half of the Parsons House property on 6 May 1808 for \$450 to Horace Graves of Northampton, printer. The deed clearly states that at the time of the sale Nathaniel⁵ was still living in the house. The deed states that at the time of the sale Nathaniel⁵ owned the property "in common and undivided with Joseph Lyman, Esquire", although by this date Lyman had already sold his one-half interest in the property to Chloe Wright. It is possible that Nathaniel⁵ was not aware that Lyman had sold already his one-half interest to Chloe Wright, as Chloe did not record the deed at the Registry of Deeds until 1827.⁴⁵

On the very same day (6 May 1808) Horace Graves sold to Nathaniel⁵ Parsons for \$500 a 5½ acre tract with buildings "in that part of Northampton which is commonly called and known by the name of Lickinwater Street...".⁴⁶

Horace Graves sold his one-half interest in the Parsons House and house lot on 10 September 1808 to Ferdinand Hunt Wright, Gentleman, of Northampton, son of Daniel Wright and stepson of Chloe Wright, for \$400, "... being that part of homestead I purchased of Nathaniel Parsons and the same on which I now live & is one half of the whole being in common & undivided with Joseph Lyman, Esquire, & is bounded southeasterly on the County road, Northeasterly by Major

⁴⁵ Nathaniel⁵ Parsons to Horace Graves, printer of Northampton for \$450, deed from Nathaniel⁵ Parsons to Horace Graves, Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 27, p. 513, executed 6 May 1808, recorded 7 May 1808. The deed was recorded at the Registry of Deeds before Justice of the Peace Daniel Wright, husband of Chloe Wright. Apparently, he made no attempt to correct the information in the deed with respect to the ownership of the other half of the property by his wife.

⁴⁶ Horace Graves to Nathaniel⁵ Parsons, Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 27, p. 514, executed 6 May 1808, recorded 7 May 1808. Graves had purchased this parcel from Eliakim Clap of Northampton, Gentleman, on 30 April 1807 for \$450. Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 27, p. 132, executed 30 April 1807, recorded 30 April 1807.

Charles Chapman, Northwesterly on land of the heirs of Josiah Parsons deceased partly & partly on land of Josiah Parsons, & Southwesterly on Thomas Lavakes land the whole lot containing one half acre more or less with one half of all buildings thereon standing.”⁴⁷ The deed makes clear that Horace Graves was living in the Parsons House at the time of the sale, possibly since he purchased the one-half interest in the property four months earlier. It is surprising that the deed still refers to the other half of the property as being owned by Joseph Lyman, 16 months after he sold his one-half interest to Chloe Wright. This clearly indicates that Chloe and her husband Daniel Wright and their daughters, and son/step-son Ferdinand H. Wright, were not yet living in the Parsons House.

In 1802 Ferdinand Hunt Wright was identified as being “of Northampton” in a deed from his father Daniel Wright for property which Daniel had purchased from his brother-in-law George Hunt. However, in an 1806 deed to Erastus Knight of Northampton, Ferdinand Hunt Wright was identified as “of Castine in the County of Hancock and in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts” (now Maine); but by September 1808, when he purchased one-half interest in the Parsons House, he was again listed as of Northampton, and identified as “Gentleman”.⁴⁸

In the 1810 U.S. Census the household of Daniel Wright, likely already having taken up residence in the Parsons House, included Daniel age 55, wife Chloe age 46, son Ferdinand age 20, two females age 10-15, and one female age 16-25 (Fanny, daughter of Daniel and Chloe).

Ferdinand H. Wright married Olive Ames (1793-1889) on 28 September 1811. They raised 4 children in the house:

- Anna (b.10 May 1822 – d.26 June 1909); Anna was unmarried.
- Roxana (b.10 May 1823; d.1823(?))
- Mary Caroline (b. 21 Dec. 1824; d. 12 July 1895, Springfield, MA);
 - Mary C. was married in the Parsons Hs on 7 Feb. 1848 to Theodore Bliss (1822-1910), a descendant of Cornet Joseph¹ Parsons, and they moved to Philadelphia
 - Theodore Bliss was the son of Martha⁵ Parsons b.1779 (Timothy⁴, Noah³, Joseph² Cornet Joseph¹) and William Bliss, b.1776
- Elizabeth (b. 1826) - married early and moved to Montreal.

The dates of birth of Ferdinand’s and Olive’s daughters in 1822, 1823, 1824, and 1826 suggest that the physical establishment of two separate households in the former Parsons house – the first Federal Period alterations and improvements to the house – likely occurred in the period between their marriage in 1811 and the birth of their daughters beginning in 1822.

Ferdinand was identified in later deeds as “Gentleman” or “Esquire”, and several deeds indicate his work executing real estate transactions as an attorney representing clients and acting for the local courts. Later, in addition to work as an attorney, he served as postmaster and cashier of the

⁴⁷ Horace Graves to Ferdinand Hunt Wright, Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 27, p. 609, executed 10 September 1808, recorded 10 September 1808.

⁴⁸ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 18, p. 309, executed 21 May 1802, recorded 2 August 1802, Ferdinand H. Wright signed the deed as a witness. Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 24, p. 161, executed 17 February 1806, recorded 1 March 1806, Ferdinand H. Wright was recorded as a grantor living in Castine.

Northampton National Bank. His father Daniel Wright was a Justice of the Peace, and was also appointed Northampton's postmaster in 1806, a position he occupied until his death in 1824. Daniel also frequently acted as an attorney and agent of the County courts in settlement of estates, sales of property, and other official matters.

The sale of the house and property by Nathaniel⁵ and Luther⁵ Parsons and its purchase by members of the Wright family occurred were very likely as the result of the same series of social and economic upheavals which wracked the new state of Massachusetts in the two decades following the conclusion of the American war for independence. However, their post-war economic trajectories, though ending in similar difficult circumstances, took markedly different paths. Elisha⁴ Parsons and his brother Nathaniel⁴, identified themselves as yeomen, sons of two generations of farmers who inherited their home lot and farm land – pasture and tillage in the rich agricultural lands located south and east of the densely settled central village of Northampton stretching to the Connecticut River– from their fathers. They continued farming during their lives in Northampton until they could no longer sustain that lifestyle, resulting in their sale of their agricultural lands, house, and home lot in 1807 and 1808 after enduring difficult economic times for the past two decades.

While these post-Revolutionary War financial difficulties contributed to the Parsons selling their lands and house, these same economic conditions drove members of the Wright family to the purchase of the former Parsons house and home lot, though from quite different circumstances. Their purchase of the former Parsons house and property was a consequence of failed mercantile ventures, unwise investments, and repeated mortgages and loans which could not be repaid, ultimately resulting in the loss of David Wright's substantial house and home lot. At the time that Wright family members purchased the old Parsons house it still retained most of its original "First Period" features and appearance dating to the early 18th century, and reflected a considerable "down-scaling" of their housing⁴⁹. However, over the next two- to three decades, as the fortunes of Daniel and his son Ferdinand improved through the help of their well-connected friends, they succeeded in carrying out considerable improvements to the house. This resulted in the construction of several modest additions and remodeling of the interior and exterior of the house, reflecting their improving fortunes and their aspirations to join the ranks of society which could desire and afford to subscribe to the aesthetic and stylistic character of Federal Period architecture then dominating new construction throughout New England and beyond. This transformation was especially evident in the immediate neighborhood of their house during the first three-four decades of the 19th century, when new houses in the Federal and later Greek Revival styles were constructed by their neighbors.

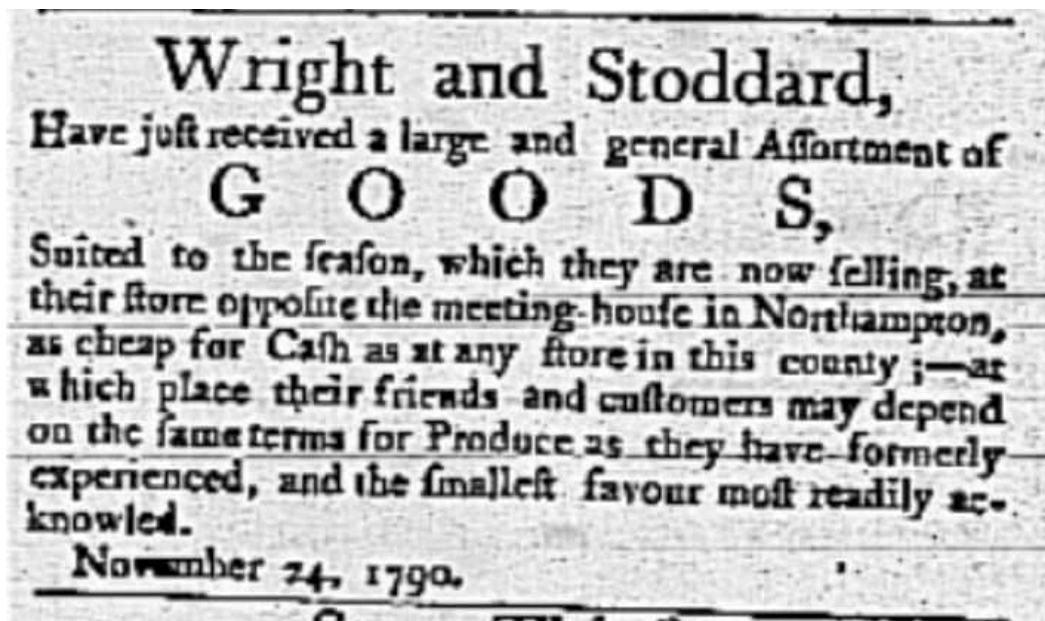
⁴⁹ The valuation of Northampton's lands and houses in the 1798 U.S. Direct Tax enumeration described the house as a two-story, wood dwelling house with a footprint of 2100 square feet, with twenty-nine windows containing 392 square feet of glass, valued by the assessors at \$1300, bounded northerly on the County Road (now Bridge Street), easterly on property of Aaron Wright. The two-story, wood dwelling house of Nathaniel⁴ Parsons, situated nearby on the north side of the County Road, was valued at \$250, with a footprint of 1000 square feet and seven windows containing 56 square feet of glass. See Judd Mss., "Land and houses and various owners" accessed at [Archive.org.](https://www.archive.org), and Appendix 2.

The Rise and Fall and Rise Again of Daniel Wright and the Former Parsons House

By 1787 Daniel Wright identified himself as a trader in Northampton. He lived on the south (or east) side of Bridge Street more or less across from the Parsons House on land which had been owned by several generations of the Wright family.⁵⁰ Three years earlier (1784) he had married Roxana Hunt; eleven days after their marriage their son Ferdinand Hunt was born. Roxana Hunt died in early 1791; before the end of the year Daniel had remarried to Chloe Lyman, and between 1794 and 1802 four daughters were born to the couple.⁵¹

In 1787 he sold 2 acres of farm land in the Common field of Northampton called Middle Gate for £20⁵². Four months later, on March 15, 1788, he purchased a small lot for £18 from prominent Northampton trader Benjamin Prescott for £18, measuring 20 feet by 30 feet in size, located opposite the meeting house and adjacent to the shop of James Wales and Joseph Clap, Jr., where he erected a new shop building from which he sold his wares⁵³.

Over the next two years Daniel Wright formed a partnership with John Stoddard of Northampton, a descendant of early Northampton settlers. An advertisement in the *Hampshire Gazette* (see image to left) dated 24 November 1790 announced their receipt of “a large and general assortment of goods”.



⁵⁰ See Judd Mss., accessed at [Archive.org https://archive.org/details/juddmanuscriptnojudd_1/page/18/mode/1up](https://archive.org/details/juddmanuscriptnojudd_1/page/18/mode/1up).

⁵¹ Rexford, “History of Parsons House Residents”.

⁵² Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 2, p. 62, executed 25 July 1787, recorded 8 December 1787.

⁵³ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 2, p. 118, executed 15 March 1788, recorded 18 March 1788.

Additional advertisements in the *Hampshire Gazette* dated 20 December 1790 and May 18, 1791 (see below) indicated the expansion of their activities into the collection of ashes for the creation of potash.

NOTICE is hereby given to the Inhabitants of Westhampton, and families adjacent, that ASHES will be received by Lt. Gideon Clark, and Mr. Jared Hunt, at the same price as is allowed at neighbouring Pot-Ash manufactories, and orders given to WRIGHT and STODDARD, of Northampton, where Goods will be delivered at cash price. SALTS of LYE, and ASHES, will also be received by said Wright and Stoddard at their Store. Northampton, Dec. 20, 1790.

CHEAP GOODS!
Wright & Stoddard
INFORM their customers and others, that they have just received an elegant assortment of Goods, suited to the present season, which they are now selling for Cash, Butter and Tow-Cloth, on the most reasonable terms. CASH paid for Salts of Lye. Northampton, May 18, 1791.

The December 20, 1790 *Hampshire Gazette* advertisement (above) listed Jared Hunt as a person in Westhampton, together with Lt. Gideon Clark, who would receive the ashes on behalf of Wright & Stoddard. Clearly the purchase of the land with buildings in Westhampton from Jared Hunt signaled a new phase of their business relationship. Over the next year Joel Wright, Jr., was added as a partner. In May 1792 Daniel Wright, in partnership with John Stoddard and Joel Wright, Jr., in the firm of Wright, Stoddard, and Wright, purchased for £14 a small parcel of land

with buildings near the meeting house in Westhampton from Jared Hunt of Westhampton. Five months later Joel Wright, Jr., one of the partners of the firm, sold for £50 his interest in this property to Daniel Wright and John Stoddard. The sale price of £50 for Joel Wright, Jr.'s one-third share suggests that considerable improvements had been made to the property since their purchase in May 1792.⁵⁴ A month after this sale the dissolution of the partnership of Wright, Stoddard, and Wright was announced in the *Hampshire Gazette* (see below), and the firm continued once again as Wright and Stoddard, and continuing to gather ashes and sell salts of lye, or potassium chloride, made from potash, and other goods at their store in Northampton. By December 12, 1792, Wright and Stoddard had opened a second store in Westhampton (see advertisement below).

THE PARTNERSHIP OF
Wright, Stoddard and Wright,
BEING dissolved by mutual consent, all persons who
have contracted accounts with said company are
requested immediately to settle the same with
WRIGHT & STODDARD.
CASH AND THE HIGHEST PRICE GIVEN FOR
SALTS OF LYE.
Northampton, Nov. 7, 1792.

WRIGHT and STODDARD,
HAVE just received at their Stores in Northampton and Westhampton, a general assortment of
G O O D S,
suitable for the present season, which they will sell at
reasonable rates at any Store in this County.
They receive most kinds of Country produce in
payment.
N. B. Cash, and the highest price given for
SALTS OF LYE.
Northampton, December 12, 1792.

C A S H,
AND THE HIGHEST PRICE, GIVEN FOR
SALTS OF LYE, by
WRIGHT & STODDARD.
Northampton, January 2, 1793.

Wright & Stoddard,
HAVE for sale,
300 bushels coarse Salt,
by the Tierce or single Bushel, also an assortment of Hollow Ware.
Northampton Jan. 26, 1795.

⁵⁴ Jared Hunt of Westhampton to Daniel Wright, Jonathan Stoddard, and Joel Wright, Jr., all of Northampton, merchants, Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 4, p. 381, executed 7 May 1792, recorded 11 May 1792; Joel Wright, Jr. to Daniel Wright and Jonathan Stoddard of Northampton, Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 6, p. 43, executed 18 October 1792, recorded 19 October 1792.

Wright & Stoddard,
HAVE just received a new supply of
G O O D S,
 which they will sell on reasonable terms, for
 ready pay or short credit.
 ALL indebted to them, whose times of
 payment are become due, are requested to
 settle immediately—those that neglect, will
 be sued indiscriminately, by the first of
 January next.
 Northampton, Nov. 18. 1795.

In April 1796 Daniel Wright, now identified as Esquire, purchased another small parcel of land in Westhampton for \$30 from Ebenezer French of Stafford, CT.⁵⁵

An advertisement posted in the *Hampshire Gazette* on June 15, 1796 (see left, below) informed the customers of Wright and Stoddard that they have “just received at their store in Westhampton a pleasing variety of Spring and summer goods.” The advertisement also informed “all those who are indebted to them at their store in Northampton...to call and settle the same between this and the end of August next; those who neglect to comply with this request will be sued indiscriminately, as all accounts at this store are to be closed by that time.” This announcement clearly indicated that the Northampton store of Wright and Stoddard was being closed and their business was being moved to Westhampton.

NEW GOODS.
Wright and Stoddard,
RESPECTFULLY inform their customers, that they have just received at their store in *Westhampton*, a pleasing variety of Spring and Summer
G O O D S,
 consisting of Broadcloths, Cassimeres, Vest Patterns, Serges, Shalloons, Laddings, Satinets, Florentines, Merinos, a Fashionable Assortment of Copper-plate Furniture, Chintzes and Calicoes, Delicate striped Gingham for Ladies Gowns, Dimities, Mullins, Lawns, Mullin and Lawn Handkerchiefs, Sprig Mullins, Linens, Nankeens, Striped and Clouded, do. Jeans, Follies, India Cottons, Black and a variety of changeable Lintings, Satins, Modes, Ribbons, Silk Handkerchiefs, Pocket, do. Cotton Hosiery, and a fashionable variety of Chintz Shawls, a variety of other articles too numerous for an advertisement.
 They expect a supply of Crackers, 6 by 8 and 7 by 9 Glaze, Nails, Brads and Hard Wares—also, a quantity of Salt Cod-Fish, Chocolate, Pepper, Allspice, Ginger, Bohea Tea, and West-India Rum, in the course of a few days. The above Goods will be sold on the most reasonable terms, and a generous credit given, if requested.
 N. B. All those who are indebted to them at their store in *Northampton*, are desired to call and settle the same, between this and the first of August next: those who neglect to comply with this request will be sued indiscriminately, as all accounts of this store are to be closed by that time.
WRIGHT & STODDARD.
 Northampton, June 15. 1796.

⁵⁵ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 15, p. 40, executed 12 April 1796, recorded 9 May 1799.

Take Notice,
That the Copartnership of
Wright & Stoddard,
BY mutual consent, will be dissolved on the
21st inst. so far as it respects their business
in this Town.—All Persons who have any de-
mands against said firm, are requested to exhibit
the same for adjustment; and all Persons indebted,
to make immediate payment to them—those
who neglect, will be sued without any further no-
tice, after the 15th of July next.
DANIEL WRIGHT,
JOHN STODDARD
N. B. THEY continue their STORE at West-
hampton; and expect to supply their Customers in
future; with such articles as are necessary and con-
venient, and upon the most reasonable terms, for
ready pay and approved credit.
Wright & Stoddard.
Northampton, June 14. '97.

One year later, on June 14, 1797, they announced in the *Hampshire Gazette* that “the co-partnership of Wright & Stoddard, by mutual consent, will be dissolved on the 21st instant so far as it respects their business in this town.” The announced dissolution of the co-partnership of Wright & Stoddard was limited to the Northampton store, but would continue with regard to their store in Westhampton (see advertisement at left).

WRIGHT & STODDARD,
INFORM their friends and the public,
that they have commenced business again in
this Town; and have received a new supply of
GOODS, from the latest arrivals at New-York—
After themselves they can dispose of them upon
such terms as will please their Customers; solicit
a renewal of their favours, and a continuance of
their custom, which will be thankfully received.
They consist of the following articles of
DRY GOODS,
—VIZ—
A handsome variety of Superfine Broad Cloths,
Cassimeres, Washed Florentines, Flannels,
Twild Coatings, Cloak Cambrs, Linens,
Cambrics, fine rich Chintzes, Common do.
Mullins, do. Handkerchiefs and Cravats,
Satin Florentine,
Black Satins, and an assortment of Lustrings,
Rice Blankets from 6-4 to 9-4;
Flanders Bedtickens,
Strip'd Satin hair Seating, with a variety of
other articles. ALSO,
Loaf Sugar and Nutmegs,
German Steel, American Blistered, do.
Warming Pans, English and American Shovels,
English Corn Fans.
Also, At their STORE at WESTAMPTON, a
large and general assortment of DRY GOODS,
too numerous for an Advertisement; and an as-
sortment of HARDWARE GOODS.
4. & 10. Nails, Bohea Tea, Rice,
Loaf Sugar, Castile Soap.
They expect in a few days,
W. I. Rum, French Brandy, Brown Sugars,
A quantity of Pickled Herring, and SALT,
8 by 6, 9 by 7 Window Glass.
All of which will be disposed of for Cash,
Pork, Beef, Butter, Flax, Rye, Corn, White Beans,
Alfalfa, Clean Cotton & Linen Rags, or short ap-
proved Credit.
They particularly request their Customers, who
are delinquent in their payments, to pay their
respective balances without delay; otherwise they
must take more coercive measures to collect their
dues without any further notice.
WRIGHT & STODDARD.
Northampton, Dec 18. 1797.

However, by December 18, 1797, Wright & Stoddard seem to have reconciled and announced the renewal of their partnership. They reopened their store in Northampton, having received a new supply of goods from New York. With the reopening of the Northampton store, they were again operating two stores in Westhampton and Northampton. (See advertisement form the *Hampshire Gazette* at left.)

On 21 August 1798, Daniel Wright, Esquire, and John Stoddard, Gentlemen, both of Northampton, were still in partnership. Together they mortgaged the property in Westhampton purchased from Jared Hunt in 1792 to Boston merchants John Amory, Thomas Amory, and Francis Amory for \$736.83. This was the first of a number of mortgages given by Daniel Wright and his partners which ultimately led to the termination of Daniel's mercantile businesses, loss of his house and home lot in Northampton, and collapse of his

financial affairs. The terms of this first mortgage required payment of the full sum with interest to the Boston merchants in six months (February 21, 1799) or the deed would remain in force.⁵⁶

On February 6, 1799 Daniel Wright of Northampton, Esquire, mortgaged for \$500 received from Joseph Lyman, Jr., Esquire, of Northampton, his “home estate in said Northampton bounded northwesterly on the road from Northampton to Hadley, Northeasterly on Aaron Wright’s estate, south east on Samuel Clarks home lot, Southwest on Warham Parsons estate with the dwelling house and buildings on the same containing by estimation one acre”. The condition of the mortgage was as follows:

Whereas the said Daniel and Joseph have this day executed their promissory note of hand of even date the said Daniel as principal & the said Joseph as surety to Ebenezer Mattoon, Jr., Esquire, for the sum of \$228.85 payable within sixty days with the interest and whereas also on the sixth day of December last the said Daniel made and executed to the said Joseph his other promissory note of that date thereby promising to pay him the said Joseph \$200.33 in ten days after the date of said note with the interest and the whole sum and interest now remains due – Now therefore if the said Daniel shall well and truly indemnify and save harmless the said Joseph from all costs, damages and trouble in consequence of the said Joseph’s becoming surety in the note first above mentioned and shall also pay the said Joseph the contents of the note last mentioned within six months from the date of these presents then this deed to be void otherwise to be in full power and virtue...⁵⁷

The above transaction indicates that Daniel Wright was quite well connected to persons of property and influence— Judge Joseph Lyman, Jr. and Ebenezer Mattoon, Jr. Lyman signed as a surety on the note given by Wright to Ebenezer Mattoon, Jr. in return for his loan of \$500. Given the date of this transaction, it appears likely that the funds obtained from Mattoon were used to pay off the previous mortgage with the Amorys, which was due on February 21, 1799. With this mortgage Lyman was ensuring that he would either be repaid or he would get Wright’s house and home lot.

⁵⁶ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 14, p. 192, executed 21 August 1798, recorded 24 August 1798. No discharge of the mortgage was added to the original recorded deed. John Amory, Thomas Amory, and Francis Amory were members of one of the most prominent mercantile firms in Boston. It is likely that Wright and Stoddard were indebted to the Amorys for goods they purchased for their store.

⁵⁷ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 14, p. 487, executed 6 February 1799, recorded 6 February 1799. No discharge of the mortgage was added to the original recorded deed. Ebenezer Mattoon (1775-1843) of Amherst served in both the Massachusetts State House of Representatives and Senate; he was elected to succeed Samuel Lyman as a member of the Federalist Party in the U.S. House of Representatives in 1799, and served there until 1803 ([https://history.house.gov/People/Listing/M/MATTOON,-Ebenezer-\(M000259\)/](https://history.house.gov/People/Listing/M/MATTOON,-Ebenezer-(M000259)/).)

Joseph Lyman, Jr. (1767-1847) served as Judge of Probate and Sheriff of Hampshire County. Ebenezer Mattoon, Jr. (1755-1843) of Amherst was a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, a justice of the peace 1782–1796, and served in the Massachusetts State Senate. He was appointed Sheriff of Hampshire County and served twenty years. Mattoon was elected to the Sixth Congress to fill a vacancy in 1795 and was reelected to the Seventh Congress and served from February 2, 1801 – March 3, 1803. He served again as a member of the State House of Representatives in 1812; major general of Massachusetts Militia 1799-1816; and adjutant general of the State militia 1816-1818.)

In 1798 Daniel's property in Northampton, which he put up as security to Joseph Lyman, Jr. for his acting as surety on the note to Ebenezer Mattoon, Jr., was described in the enumeration and assessment for the Direct Tax of 1798 assessed in October 1798, as consisting of the following:⁵⁸

- a two-story, wood dwelling house with a footprint of 2100 square feet, with 29 windows containing 392 square feet of glass, valued by the assessors at \$1300, bounded northerly on the County Road (now Bridge Street), easterly on property of Aaron Wright;
- one store, situated opposite the meeting house, 16 x 24 feet in dimension, assessed at a value of \$300.

Sylvester Judd indicated the location of Daniel Wright's land in his notes on the sequence of ownership of house lots in certain parts of Northampton (see Figure 3 below). Wright's house as described in the deed of 16 April, 1799 sat on the south side of the highway (now Bridge St.), bounded "easterly by Aaron Wright's land, Westerly on Warham Parsons' land, and southerly on Samuel Clark's land together with the home and other buildings on the same..."

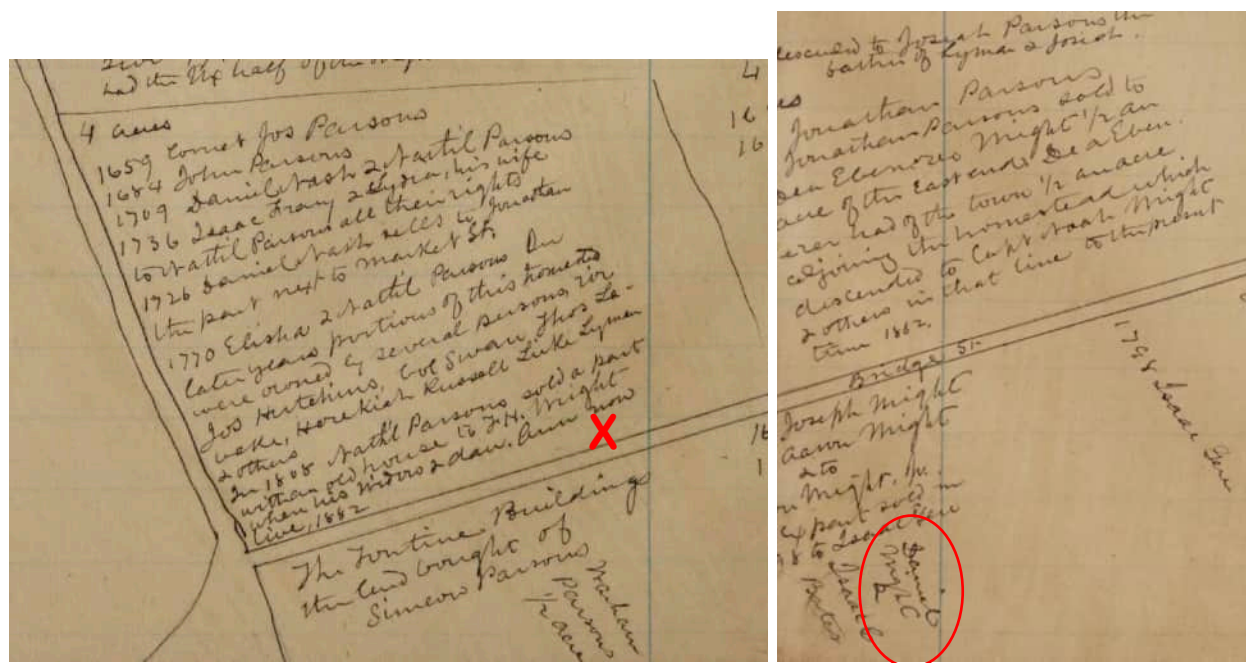


Figure 3. Excerpts from Sylvester Judd Manuscript "Northampton Streets and Various owners. The red oval on the right notes the ownership of land in this area by Daniel Wright and the approximate location of his house; the X indicates the approximate location of the Parsons House.
(https://archive.org/details/juddmanuscriptnojudd_1/page/1/mode/1up)

⁵⁸ Data from the 1798 U.S. Direct Tax, as found in "Notes Judd Manuscript – Northampton, "Owner/each separate lot/Description & Dimensions Buildings, Barns, corn barns, mills, etc. with descriptions of Lands bounds etc."; and in "Notes Judd Manuscript – Northampton, Dwelling houses, buildings, outhouses not exceeding 100 dollars/acreage of lots/dollars (value)", Hampshire Room for Local History, Forbes Library, Northampton, MA. See Appendix 2.

Two months later, on 16 April 1799, Daniel Wright, Esquire, mortgaged the property again, this time for \$2000 to a group of New York merchants: Thomas Pearsall, Thomas C. Pearsall, Rudolphus Bogert, William Walton Woolsey, Benjamin Woolsey Rogers, George Codwise, Jr., Peter Ludlow, James Codwise, John Heathcote, James Dall, and Hay Stevenson, all of New York, in the County of New York, and the state of New York, Merchants.⁵⁹ The property mortgaged was described as

“...the lot of land lying in said Northampton containing about one acre on which I now live bounded northerly on the highway, Easterly on Aaron Wright’s land, Westerly on Warham Parsons’ land, and southerly on Samuel Clark’s land together with the home and other buildings on the same – Also the store which I own in said Northampton and lot on which the store stands, being thirty feet long and twenty feet wide bounded north on the highway, West on Isaac Gears land, South on Benjamin Prescott’s land, and East on Benjamin Prescott’s land.”

The conditions of the mortgage were as follows:

The said Daniel Wright shall pay or cause to be paid the several sums hereafter mentioned which he and his partner in business John Stoddard now jointly owe to the aforementioned Grantees - To wit £154-14-11 New York Currency to Thomas Pearsall, Thomas C. Pearsall, and Rudolphus Bogert due to them for goods with lawful interest from the first of April instant - Also £24-3-8 New York Currency to Thomas Pearsall due to him for goods as surviving partner of the House of Pearsall and Pitt with lawful interest for the same from the first of April instant – Also to William Walton Woolsey and Benjamin Woolsey Rogers £117-19-00 New York Currency due to them for goods with lawful interest for the same from the first of April instant - Also £98-2-00 New York Currency to George Codwise, Jr., Peter Ludlow, and James Codwise for the balance due to them on a note in New York Currency with lawful interest for the same from the first of April instant – Also \$546.79 to John Heathcote, James Dall, and Hay Stevenson due to them on a note with lawful interest from the first of April instant within nine months from the date hereof, then the above deed to be void otherwise in force.

It is likely that a portion of these funds were used to pay off the mortgage from Joseph Lyman, but the majority was owed the New York merchants for goods that Wright & Stoddard had received from the New York merchants for their store.

On 21 March 1801 Daniel Wright again mortgaged the same home lot, dwelling house and other buildings “where I now live”, and his shop and the land it stood on situated between Isaac Gears’ shop and the shop occupied by Nathan Storrs, in two separate transactions: one to Joseph Lyman of Northampton, Esquire, for \$2000.68, with the sum payable in three years; and the other to

⁵⁹ Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 17, p. 523, executed 16 April 1799, recorded 18 April 1799. The amounts due to the various grantees of the mortgage were not received until 17 June 1813, when the mortgage deed was assigned to Joseph Lyman, Esquire, of Northampton for the sums owed to them with interest.⁵⁹ Surprisingly, the surviving group of New York merchants who assigned the mortgage to Joseph Lyman did not record the transaction in the Hampshire County Registry of Deeds until March 18, 1831.

Erastus Lyman of Northampton, Gentleman, (brother of Joseph Lyman) for the sum of \$4,700, by a note executed by Daniel Wright as principal and his business partner John Stoddard, Esquire, as surety, payable in three years. No discharge was recorded for the mortgage taken from Joseph Lyman; the mortgage from Erastus Lyman for \$4900 was finally discharged on April 15, 1808.⁶⁰ The size of these loans indicates the stakes had increased considerably. Daniel Wright and his partner John Stoddard were clearly remortgaging their property for ever higher amounts to settle previous mortgages and accounts with merchants from whom they had purchased goods, and for other financial dealings; the ultimate result was greater and deeper financial debt.

The co-partnership of Wright & Stoddard and their storekeeping appears to have been fully dissolved by 1802, as no further advertisements appear in the *Hampshire Gazette*.

On 20 May 1802 Daniel Wright sold to his son Ferdinand H. Wright, for \$15.00 his claim and rights to the homestead of his deceased father-in-law (grandfather to Ferdinand) Joel Hunt.⁶¹ Daniel Wright purchased the right to this property from his brother-in-law, George Hunt, several years earlier. The property, situated in the Northampton Meadow in Middle Gate, passed to George Hunt as the oldest son and heir of Joel Hunt after the death of his mother, who was granted use of the house as her widow's dower. It is likely that this sale by Daniel Wright to his son was made to protect this property from potential seizure for Daniel's growing debts.

By 1803 advertisements for both John Stoddard and David Wright appeared in the *Hampshire Gazette*, though not together or in any partnership, announcing their services for various clients in the settlement of estates and other duties for the Court of Probate and other county courts in Northampton. By 1807 David Wright was appointed Postmaster of Northampton by the Anti-Federalist Republican Party, a post he kept until his death in 1824.

John Stoddard, along with two other Northampton residents, William Lyman and David King, were among a large group of investors from Connecticut and Massachusetts who invested in and purchased land from the Connecticut Land Company, a land speculation company established in 1795 to purchase and encourage settlement on lands in Connecticut's Western Reserve located south of Lake Erie. In 1795 the Connecticut Land Company purchased three million acres of land; among the original proprietors were Stoddard, Lyman, and King, who together invested \$24,730 in the purchase of land in the Reserve. Apparently, Daniel Wright, in his

⁶⁰ Daniel Wright to Erastus Lyman, Hampshire County Deeds, Vol. 17, p. 456, executed 21 March 1801, recorded 21 March 1801. Daniel Wright to Joseph Lyman, Hampshire County Deeds, Vol. 17, p. 458, executed 21 March 1801, recorded 21 March 1801.

⁶¹ Daniel Wright to Ferdinand H. Wright, Hampshire County Deeds, Vol. 18, p. 258, executed 20 May 1802, recorded 29 May 1802. Ferdinand H. Wright sold this property four years later to Erastus Knight, cordwainer of Northampton, for \$400. Hampshire County Deeds, Vol. 24, p. 161, executed 17 February 1806, recorded 1 March 1806. It was not until 10 September 1808 that Ferdinand Hunt Wright of Northampton, Gentleman, purchased for \$400 from Horace Graves of Northampton, printer, "...that part of the [Parsons] homestead I [Horace Graves] purchased of Nathaniel⁵ Parsons and the same on which I now live and is one half of the whole being in common and undivided with Joseph Lyman, Esqr...". Hampshire County Deeds, Vol 27, p. 609, executed 10 September 1808, recorded 10 September 1808.

business partnership with John Stoddard, was swept up in this speculative venture, financing it through the mortgages from Joseph and Erastus Lyman.⁶²

Two advertisements (below) placed in the *Hampshire Gazette* on February 22, 1802 and February 15, 1803 by John Stoddard and Solomon Stoddard, Jr., of Northampton, promoted the sales of land in the Connecticut Western Reserve.

Valuable Lands For Sale.

THE subscribers offer for sale a number of lots of LAND in the Township No. 3, in the 11th Range in the Connecticut Western Reserve, equal in quality, if not superior, to any in that territory. This township, has been explored and surveyed into Lots of 80, and 160 acres each. It is in a most healthy situation—possesses a luxuriant soil, and many natural advantages not common to the other townships. It has on it an excellent mill-seat, and is situated at the head of the boat navigation on the river Cayahoga—It adjoins township called Hudson, containing already twenty-eight Families—many of which removed from Goshen, in Connecticut, and are wealthy Farmers—in this town of Hudson, a good Grist and Sawmill, are erected—there are also schools for children. The inhabitants are now preparing to build a house for public worship, and the settlements are rapidly increasing. A contract is made for cutting a road from the east line of said Township, No. 3, to the Cayahoga River.—And this Township is thought by good judges, to possess as many advantages for the actual settler, as any in the territory—where Government is now established and Courts are regularly holden. The Proprietors intend commencing a settlement on said township, the ensuing spring; & the subscribers would prefer selling to actual settlers only. Since the peace in Europe they conceive the prospects of the young enterprising Farmer much lessened in the New-England States, and trust that such as contemplate removing to new settlements, will be prompted, by this circumstance, to emigrate while lands remain at their present low price. The terms of sale will be made known by applying to either of the subscribers.

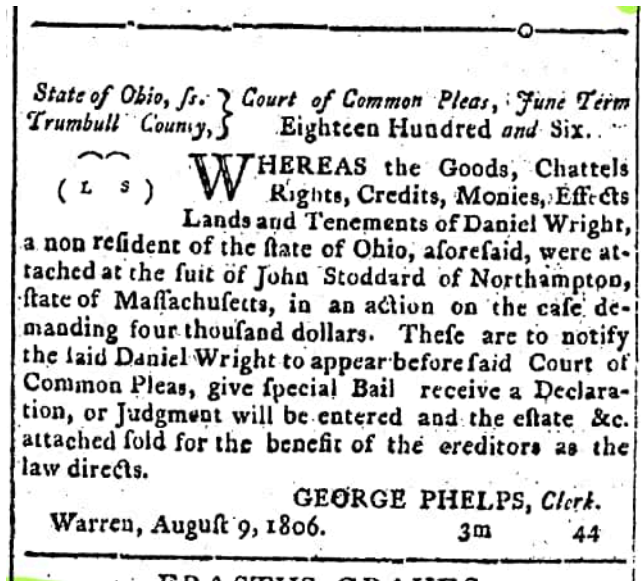
JOHN STODDARD,
S. STODDARD, Jun.
Northampton, Feb. 22, 1802.

"A BETTER COUNTRY."

THE industrious and enterprising, who wish to emigrate to the territory commonly known by the name of the Connecticut Western Reserve (now the county of Trumbull in the new State of OHIO) are hereby notified, that the subscribers, severally, have for sale sundry lots of land in the Township called Northampton—being No. 3, in the 11th range of Townships, as originally laid out by the Connecticut Land Company. This township has been thoroughly explored and surveyed into lots of 80 and 160 acres each, and partition thereof made among the Proprietors—and the land is thought, by good judges, to be equal in quality, if not superior, to any in that country.—A settlement was commenced, the last season, on said Township, and a number of families are expecting to remove thither the ensuing spring.—This Township is in a most healthy situation—possesses a luxuriant soil and many natural advantages not common to the other Townships. It has on it a most valuable mill seat, and is situated at the head of the boat-navigation on the river Cayahoga. It adjoins the town of Hudson, which contains nearly forty families—most of whom emigrated from the State of Connecticut, and are substantial farmers. The character of this country is too well known to require a particular description. Suffice it to say, that in consequence of the mildness of the climate, the fertility of the soil and the increase of civil and religious advantages, it is rapidly settling. Mr. Robert Campbell, who resides in said Town of Northampton, is authorized by the subscribers and the other proprietors, to dispose of their lands therein to actual settlers only. Purchasers wishing further information will please to apply to said CAMPBELL on said Township, or to either of the subscribers.

JOHN STODDARD,
S. STODDARD, Jun.
Northampton, (Mass.) Feb. 15, 1803.

⁶² Solomon Stoddard, Jr., and John Stoddard were brothers, descendant of Rev. Solomon Stoddard, the first minister of Northampton. Solomon practiced law in Northampton and for many years filled the offices of Register of Deeds and Clerk of the Courts. John Stoddard also practiced Law and served as Deputy Sheriff and Sheriff of Hampshire County for many years. He was one of the surveying party from the Connecticut Land Company which came to New Connecticut (Ohio) in 1799, likely after he signed as surety on the March 21, 1801 for the note to Erastus Lyman.



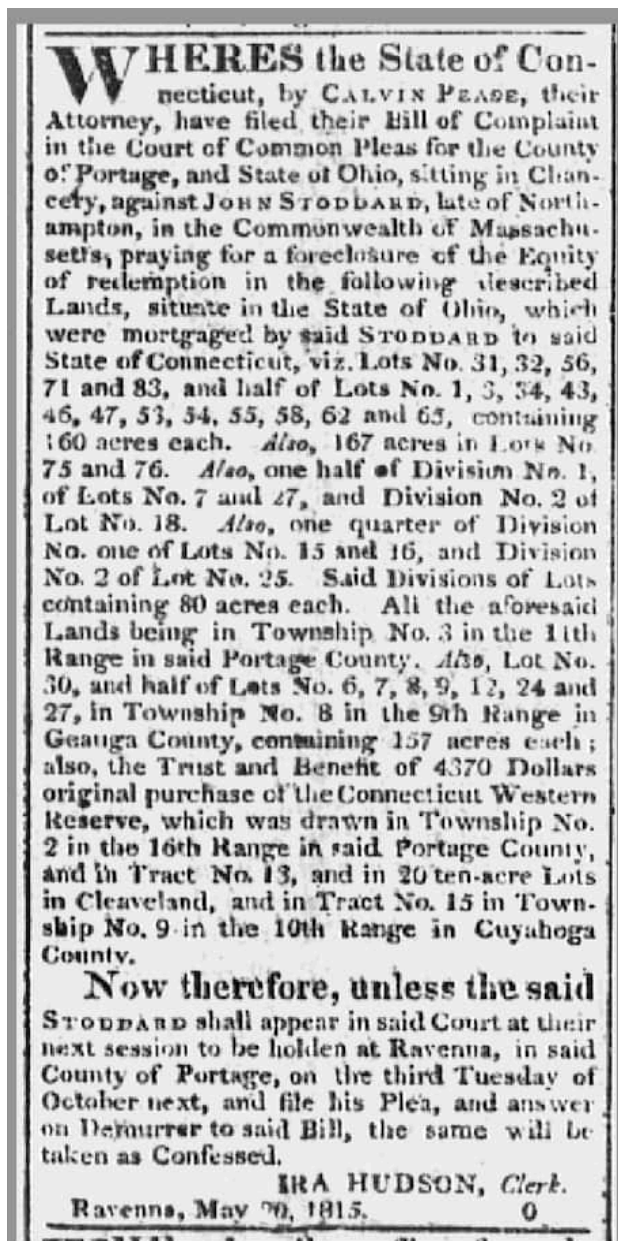
On August 9, 1806, a notice appeared in the *Hampshire Gazette* (left) announcing a suit brought in the Court of Common Pleas of Trumbull County, Ohio, by John Stoddard of Northampton, Massachusetts, against Daniel Wright, a non-resident of Ohio regarding the attachment of the goods, chattels, rights, credits, monies, effects, lands and tenements of Daniel Wright of Northampton, Massachusetts, in an action demanding \$4000. This action appears to confirm that the large sums which Daniel Wright borrowed and for which he mortgaged his property were used for a speculative venture to purchase and sell at great profit lands in Ohio.

Daniel Wright's economic woes appear to have been settled by 1813, though it is not clear exactly how this was achieved. The mortgage for \$4700 to Erastus Lyman, executed in 1801, was discharged by Lyman on 15 April 1808 with acknowledgement of his receipt of the principal and interest (\$4900) from Daniel Wright and his surety John Stoddard. How they managed to obtain the funds to meet this obligation in 1808 is unclear.

The mortgage for \$2000 with the group of New York merchants given in 1799 was assigned to Joseph Lyman in 1813, thus satisfying Daniel Wright's financial debt to the New York merchants, but transferring it to Joseph Lyman. It is not clear how this debt with Joseph Lyman was settled, as no discharge of the obligation has yet been found. Perhaps Joseph Lyman was satisfied with keeping Daniel Wright's house and 2-acre home lot a short distance north and east of the Parsons House, and his store opposite the meeting house. What is clear is that the brothers Joseph and Erastus Lyman were critical in bailing out Daniel and his family from total bankruptcy. It was Joseph Lyman who in 1807 purchased one-half of the Parsons House (Nathaniel⁵ Parsons' share) from Ralph Huntington for \$500 and one week later sold it for \$320 to Chloe Wright, the wife of Daniel Wright. It also appears likely that Joseph Lyman assisted Daniel Wright in being named Justice of the Peace in 1806, an important administrative function which included serving as magistrate, judicial officer, and law enforcement official, and handling a range of duties including presiding over civil and criminal cases, issuing warrants, administering oaths, performing marriages and witnessing deeds and other legal documents. Daniel Wright's identification as "Esquire" on deeds as early as the 1790s indicates that he claimed a certain standing and respect in the community. Notices posted in the *Hampshire Gazette* indicated he was appointed by various County Court officials to perform a variety of legal duties ordered by the courts. By the 1820 he was identified by various notices as performing the duties of Deputy Sheriff.

In 1814 David Wright was appointed principal assessor for collection of the data for the 17th Collection District of Massachusetts consisting of Hampshire, Hampden, and Franklin Counties for the upcoming Federal Direct tax of 1815, a similar tax to that imposed in 1798.

As all of these appointments by his colleagues in the Republican party holding high positions in the administration of Hampshire County's bureaucracy allowed both Daniel Wright and his son Ferdinand Hunt Wright to earn fees for all of their activities, to move in influential circles, and to allow them the resources to make modest improvements to the aging Parsons House, exhibiting their knowledge of and participation in the aesthetic and stylistic movements of the day, even though they could not match the more elaborate expressions of these styles which were being built everywhere around them.



On August 23, 1815, the *Hampshire Gazette* published a notice (see image on the left) that a Bill of Complaint was filed in Ohio by the State of Connecticut on May 20, 1815 against John Stoddard, "late of Northampton" in the Court of Common Pleas for the County of Portage, to obtain a foreclosure of the right of redemption on a large number of properties in Ohio which were mortgaged by Stoddard to the State of Connecticut; also, the "Trust and Benefit of \$4370 original purchase of the Connecticut Western Reserve" in Portage County and Cuyahoga County. Stoddard was to appear in court and answer to the said Bill, or his right of redemption on the large number of properties in Ohio which were mortgaged by Stoddard would be taken.

Western Reserve Lands.

THE subscriber offers for sale 8 or 10 lots of land in the town of *Northampton*, county of Portage, and state of Ohio. This township is situated *at the head of the boat navigation on the river Cuyahoga*—has a handsome settlement upon it, and possesses peculiar local advantages for enterprising settlers. Also, 6 lots in the township of *Chester*, county of Geauga, in the same State. This township is situated about 12 miles from Lake Erie, and contains a thriving settlement. A description of the soil and timber, as contained in the field notes of the surveyors, is in possession of the subscriber, who will give any information in his power, in relation to the subject, to any one who may be disposed to purchase.

S. STODDARD, JR.

Northampton, Mass. March 24, 1824. 60*

It is unclear how this 1815 action was resolved, but in March 1824 Solomon Stoddard, Jr., John Stoddard's brother and partner in their 1803 advertisement in the *Hampshire Gazette* for sale of lands in Ohio, advertised again for sale of lands in Cuyahoga County in a township named "Northampton" (see advertisement at left). It is unclear whether he was able to redeem at least some of the properties involved in the 1815 action against his brother John.

Members of the Wright family and their descendants owned part or all of the Nathaniel³ Parsons house from 1807 until 1941 when the property was bequeathed to the Northampton Historical Society through the will of Anna Catherine Bliss (1848 - 1941), a descendant of both the Wright family and the Parsons family through her grandmother Martha (Parsons) Bliss, a fifth-generation descendant of Cornet Joseph Parsons

E. 1941 – 2026 Northampton Historical Society and Historic Northampton

The Nathaniel³ Parsons House became the property of the Northampton Historical Society by bequest from Anna Catherine Bliss through the efforts of Edith Carpenter Shepherd, the immediate neighbor to the north of Anna Catherine Bliss during her time as owner and resident of the Nathaniel³ Parsons House.

The Northampton Historical Society was formed in 1904 and incorporated in the following year “to preserve and exhibit objects of historical value and interest,” the result the of the city’s commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the European settlement of Northampton in 1654. Chair of the historical collections and their exhibition for the 250th anniversary celebration of Northampton’s founding was Thomas Munroe Shepherd, who with his wife Edith Carpenter Shepherd owned and occupied the house and property located immediately to the north of the Parsons House (now one of three historic houses owned by Historic Northampton, Inc.) Thomas Shepherd died in 1923, but his widow, Edith Carpenter Shepherd kept alive his unrealized idea of forming an historical museum. It was Edith Shepherd who convinced both Anna Catherine Bliss and their neighbor to the south, Jane Damon Smith (a descendant of Northampton’s Federal Period builder-architect Isaac Damon and co-owner of the former Damon house), to donate their historic houses to the Northampton Historical Society. When Edith Shepherd died in 1969, her house (1797) joined the Parsons (1719) and Damon (1813) houses as properties of the Northampton Historical Society, and the Shepherd Trust was formed from the assets of the Shepherd estate to fund future activities of the Northampton Historical Society (NHS). The collections of the NHS were moved from Memorial Hall in Northampton, where they were housed since 1924, to the three Bridge Street properties of the NHS. The name of the Society was changed to Historic Northampton in 1989, and formally incorporated under that name in 2012. (<https://www.historicnorthampton.org/history-of-the-society.html>)

History of Construction and Alterations

Phase 1A - 1719 d.

Phase 1B – c.1728

Summary

Phase 1A – 1719d.

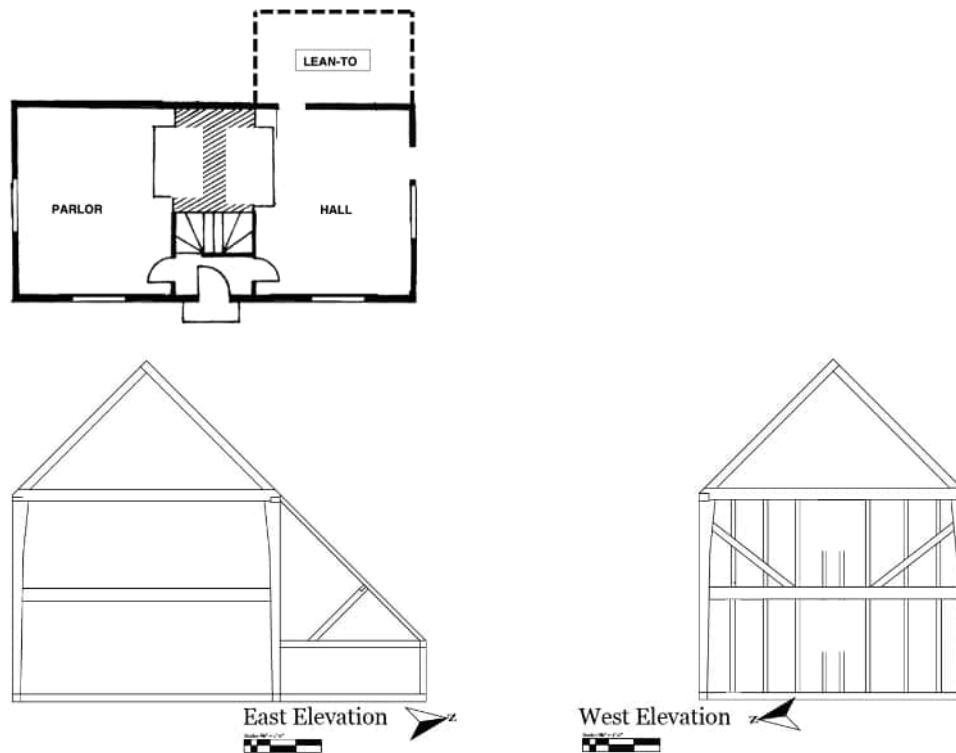


Figure 4. Conjectural plan and frame drawings of the original c.1719 house. The drawing of the east elevation includes a conjectural reconstruction of the rear lean-to. The absence of studs in the drawing indicates that the framing in the east walls was not accessible for documentation. The drawing of the west elevation is based on observation and measurements. (Framing drawings by Nevan Carling. Plan drawing adapted by Myron O. Stachiw.)

The original two-story, one-room deep, center-chimney, timber-framed building was constructed in 1719, likely by the brothers Nathaniel³ (1686-1738) and Jonathan³ (1691-1782) Parsons (Figure 4). The house faced south on what is now Bridge Street. Its form, construction methods, and the joinery employed in framing the building reflect the signature first period construction methods which defined Connecticut River Valley architecture of the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The house measured 20 feet in depth and 40 feet in width; it was built over an excavated cellar situated only under the west room (parlor, Rm 112). The house was built with leaded casement windows; banks of three casement windows were located in the gable-end walls of three rooms: the west parlor (Rm 112), parlor chamber (Rm 210), and the east- or hall chamber (Rm 202). The exact form of the windows on the front elevation has not yet been determined, but some evidence suggests that similar banks of leaded casement windows were also located in the south walls of all four rooms. Brick nogging still survives in a portion of the west wall of the house in the west parlor (Rm 112), suggesting that brick nogging had been

installed in the exterior walls of the ground floor rooms when the house was built. A one-story lean-to was erected behind the east room of the house, perhaps at the time of construction, or not long afterwards. Physical evidence indicates that the ground-floor rooms were not fully finished until the mid- to late 1720s, and the second-floor rooms not until the early 19th century.

Phase 1B – c.1728

The west parlor (Rm 112) with its exposed framing members, chamfered summer beam, unplastered walls and ceiling, was finished. The summer beam, girts and posts were cased, and a classically-inspired compound *cyma recta* and *cyma reversa* crown molding was applied to the summer beam- and girt casings, and the walls and ceiling were lathed and plastered. It is likely that event was related to Nathaniel³'s remarriage about 1728, but unclear whether this work occurred prior to or after his marriage.

Discussion

Nathaniel³ Parsons and his younger brother Jonathan³ began preparations for the new house at least a year before 1719. Dendrochronology dating of timbers in the Phase 1 portion of the Parsons House indicated that the trees from which timbers used to frame the Parsons house were hewn and sawn were felled between 1716 and 1718.⁶³ During this period, house frames were generally erected in the spring of the year following the fall or winter in which they were felled; as a result, it can be stated that the house frame was raised no earlier than 1719, possibly a year or two later. It is not known if Nathaniel³ and Jonathan³ were involved in the felling and hewing of the trees, but the fact that Jonathan³ was identified as a housewright a decade or so later suggests that he might at the least have been involved in some of the hewing of the timbers, erection of the frame, and subsequent work of enclosing the frame with sheathing and roof shingles along with Nathaniel³. It is very likely that those framing elements which were sawn, such as studs, floor joists, and braces, were processed in sawmills owned by their uncles.

While the site and building materials were being prepared – a cellar excavated and cellar foundation walls built - trees were felled and hewn or sawn, and the frame prepared. Once these tasks were completed, the frame was laid out and assembled, and the chimney mass with two fireplaces on the ground floor was constructed by brick masons. It is unclear how quickly this was accomplished, as the widowed Nathaniel³ and his married younger brother Jonathan³ (married in 1714) with his wife and infant children were able to continue to reside in the house close by on the two-acre house lot which Nathaniel³ had inherited from his father.⁶⁴ Little is known about this house, other than it was likely erected about 1683 on a two-acre house lot which Jonathan² inherited in 1684 after his father, Cornet Joseph¹ Parsons, had died. Jonathan² died ten years later in 1694 when he was only 37 years of age. The oldest of his four living

⁶³ Flynt, *A Dendrochronology Study of Select Framing Timbers from the Nathaniel Parsons House*, 2024, pp. 7-13.

⁶⁴ Nathaniel³'s and Jonathan³'s widowed mother Mary had remarried in 1698 to Benjamin Hastings of nearby Hatfield. The first four of the five children born to Mary and Benjamin were born in Northampton between 1699 and 1706; the fifth was born in Hatfield in 1707, suggesting that the couple and their young children, as well as the youngest daughter Lydia (age 14) from Mary's first marriage to Jonathan² Parsons had moved to Hatfield. Lydia was the only one of Mary and Jonathan²'s children to marry and reside in Hatfield; her brother Jonathan was married in Hatfield to a woman born in Hatfield, but they resided in Northampton.

children, Nathaniel³, was 12 years old. Jonathan²'s estate was valued at only £372 -1- 0. A final settlement of the estate in 1709 awarded to eldest son Nathaniel³ the house, two-acre house lot, and a double share of Jonathan²'s real estate; youngest son Jonathan³ received a single share of lands. Jonathan²'s 1694 probate inventory recorded 43 acres of meadow and upland valued at £225, and a dwelling house and house lot valued at only £40.⁶⁵

If Nathaniel³ took up residence in the new house once it was made tight to the weather and at least one room was made livable, it is likely that Jonathan³ and his family continued to reside in the old house until 1726, when Jonathan³ purchased his recently-vacated grandfather's house and house lot located immediately to the south of the new Parsons House. By 1726, Nathaniel³ was probably already living in the new house.



As described in the 1992 SPNEA study, the exterior of the building was finished with horizontal board siding, but of different quality on the various elevations.⁶⁶ On the front -or south elevation, the siding consisted of planed flush boarding, with horizontal scoring to simulate overlapping weatherboards. (Figure 5).

Figure 5.
Detail of Phase 1 flush board siding on the south elevation. This one board was scored twice to make it appear like three overlapping weatherboards. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw.)

This siding survives now only at second-floor level, as at ground-floor level the Phase 1 siding was replaced in the early 19th century with rough mill-sawn, square-edged, butted boards. The replacement of the original siding coincided with the installation of the existing large sash windows. On the two gable-end walls the Phase 1 siding consisted of weatherboarding, and on the rear wall of unscored flush boards. To a large extent, these remain in place on the original rear- and gable-end walls of the house (Figure 6).

⁶⁵ Cornet Joseph¹ Parsons, Hampshire County Court Records at the Hampshire County Registry of Probate, Northampton, MA, Book 1, pp. – 236, 25 March 1684. Copies of the will, probate inventory, 1709 settlement are reprinted in Gerald James Parsons, *The Parsons Family, Volume One*, pp. 61-72; Jonathan² Parsons, Hampshire County Registry of Probate, Box 110, No. 6 “Estate of Jonathan Parsons, Northampton, 1694”; and No. 7., “Estate of Jonathan Parsons, Northampton, 1700”. A copy of the probate inventory and additional 1709 settlement are reprinted in Gerald James Parsons, *The Parsons Family, Volume One*, pp. 118—120.

⁶⁶ Clancey and Leeke, “Report on Building Archaeology”; see discussions in sections titled “The original House, c.1725-35”; “The Original Siding of the Façade: Scored Flush Boarding”; “Excavation EXT-W1 (West Wall) – The Original Siding of the Gable Ends: Thin Weatherboarding”.

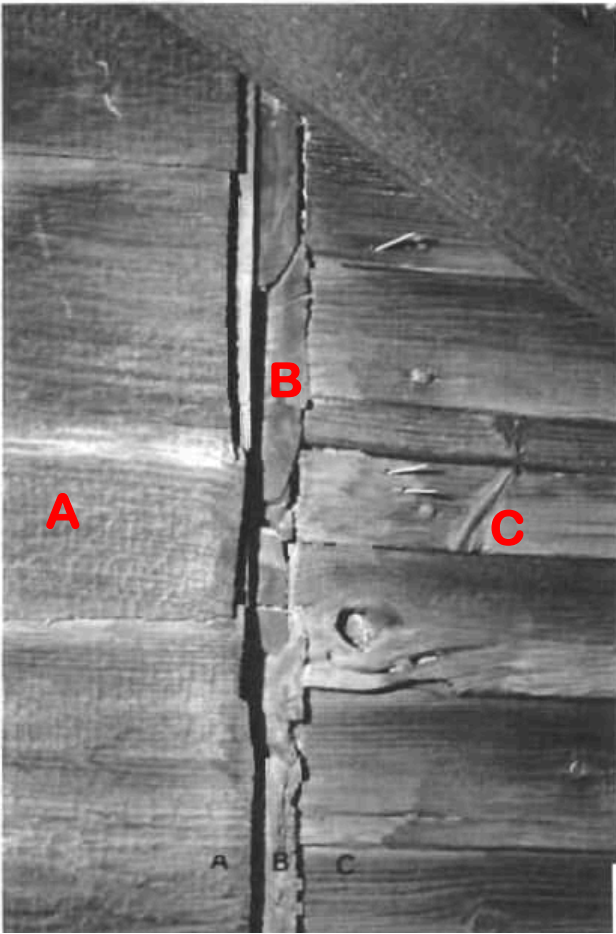


Figure 6.

Detail view of the west gable end wall of the house from the attic of the west wing. The vertical seam marks the junction between the west walls of Phase 1 house on the right and the Phase 2 full rear lean-to on the left. The boards on the right (C) are weatherboarding applied to the Phase 1 house; the boards on the left (A) are flush board siding applied to the gable-end- and rear walls of the Phase 2 saltbox-shaped lean-to. B indicates the Phase 1 flush board sheathing on the rear wall of the Phase 1 house. This also indicates that at the corners of the Phase 1 house, the ends of the weatherboarding were carefully scribed to the flush boards to ensure a tight fit. (Photograph EXT-37 from Clancey and Leeke, 1992.)

The SPNEA investigators also discovered evidence that a pentice – a small, sloping, overhanging roof - existed as a Phase 1 feature over the front doorway (Figure 7).

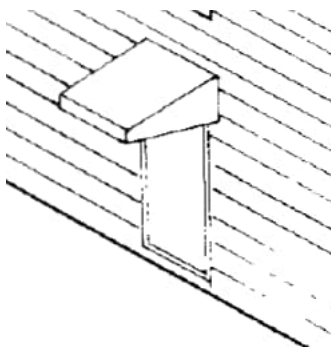


Figure 7. Conjectural reconstruction of the Phase 1 pentice over the front doorway of the Parsons House. (From Clancey and Leeke, 1992.)

Building archaeology conducted in 1992 by SPNEA architectural historians and in 2024-2025 by the author and his colleagues has strongly suggested that the interior of the house was not entirely “finished” in the year or two after its raising. In fact, it appears that only one room on the ground floor – the hall or kitchen in the east half of the house (Rm 102) - could be called “finished”,

with horizontal, molded-board sheathing applied to the walls – within the first decade after the house frame was raised. If Nathaniel did reside in the house between 1719 and his marriage in 1728, it is likely that the hall/kitchen also served as his bedroom, and that the unfinished west parlor was rarely used. The second-floor rooms remained “unfinished” through the 18th century. This is supported by no evidence of any earlier finishes on the walls of the second-floor rooms other than the sawn and split lath fastened by early machine-cut nails.

Evidence of an original- or very early lean-to behind the hall/kitchen was discovered on the rear plate of the Phase 1 house in the form of four empty step-mortises in which the upper ends of the lean-to rafters were seated and pegged (Figure 8). Several of the step-mortises still contained the pegs which fastened the lean-to rafters to the plate. These four step-mortises existed on the rear plate along with step-mortises in which the lower ends of the rafters of the Phase 1 roof rested - but were present only in the section of the plate over the hall.

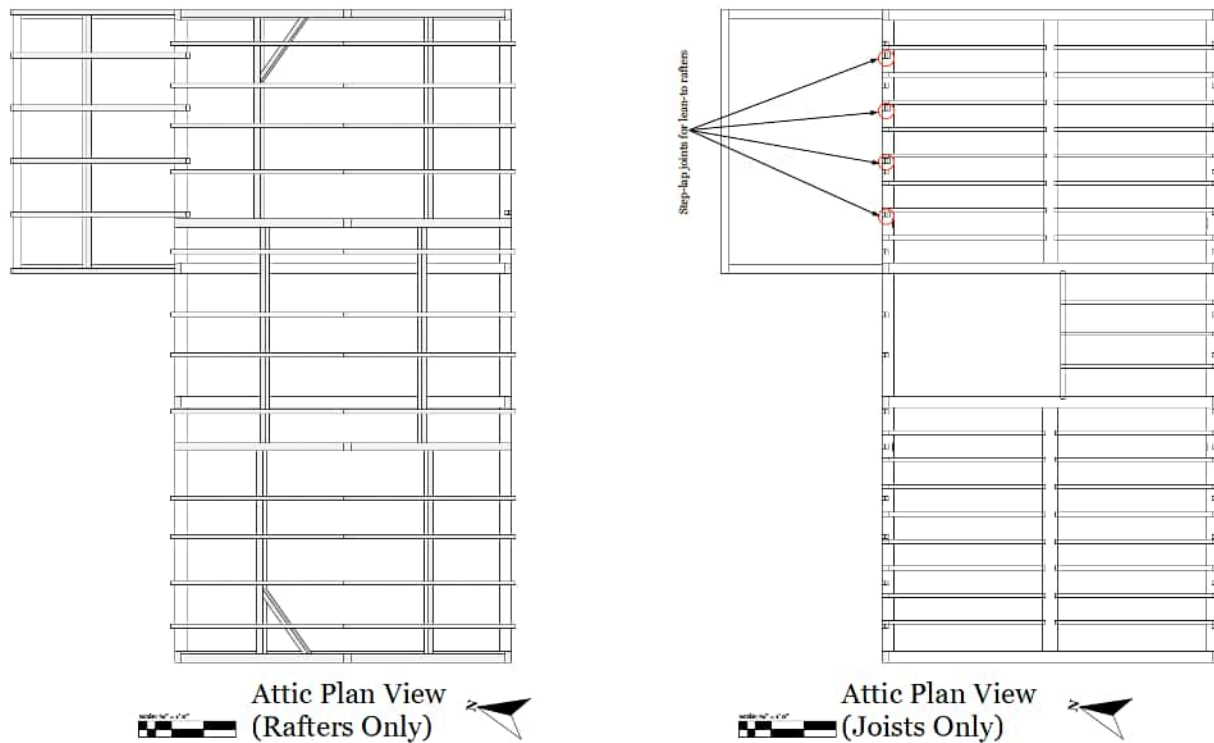


Figure 8. Left - Plan of the roof framing of the Phase 1A house roof rafters and rear lean-to rafters. Right – Plan of the attic floor framing. Note the mortises indicated on the north plate for both the house roof rafters and the lean-to roof rafters (the latter are indicated by arrows and red circles). (Drawing by Nevan Carling.)

The Front Entry – Rm 101

Little evidence was discovered for the nature of the Phase 1 finishes and form of the staircase to the second floor. All existing finishes date to the 19th century and later alterations. It is clear that the present front entry is probably the same size as the original Phase 1 space.

The Hall /Kitchen– Rm 102

The large room on the ground floor in the east half of the house was the original hall or kitchen of the house. If Nathaniel³ occupied the house between its date of initial raising in 1719 and his marriage in 1728, the room likely also served as his bedroom. A large cooking fireplace with a bake oven opening into the firebox occupied most of the west wall, along with doorways to the front entry and to cellar stairs down to the cellar under the west room or parlor (Rm 112). The prominent longitudinal summer beam with its flat chamfers and lamb's tongue stops, and floor joists in the ceiling were exposed and whitewashed; the walls were covered with planed horizontal feather-edged- and molded lapped boards (Figure 9). These boards also show traces of a yellow paint and/or a whitewash. However, this could not be conclusively determined without additional removal of some of the Phase 2 lath and plaster from the sheathing.



Figure 9. Detail views of the Phase 1 sheathing of the interior walls of the hall or kitchen (Rm 102). Phase 2 lath and plaster and wainscot were applied in the early 19th century over the Phase 1 sheathing. The Phase 1 sheathing exposed in these photographs was covered by an architrave surrounding a doorway to the rear lean-to. The mill-sawn boards, which measured between 8 and 12 inches in width, were planed smooth on one face and finished with a feathered lower edge and molded top edge. The feathered lower edge of the upper board fit behind the molded upper edge of the board beneath it. (Photographs 102-5 and 102-6 from Clancey and Leeke, 1992.)

It is unclear if the casings covering the posts and beams in this room were applied at the same time as the feathered and molded wall sheathing, or at the time that the west parlor (Rm 112) was finished in the late 1720s. The edge moldings on the casings in both rooms are similar quarter round moldings. In the hall/kitchen the beam casings were cut to fit around the floor joists, extending all the way up to the bottom of the floor boards overhead; in the west parlor the top edge of the beam casings was even with the lower face of the floor joists, likely because a lath

and plaster ceiling and the crown molding covered from view the top of the beam casings. In the hall, as there was no plaster ceiling until the early 19th century, the beam casings were carried up around the joists. The summer beam, beam casings, floor joists and floorboards overhead were heavily stained with a layer of dark brown soot, smoke, and grease from nearly 100 years of kitchen smoke (Figure 10). It appears that below the soot layer whitewash had first been applied to the joists and floorboards.



Figure 10.
View of the floor joist and underside of a floorboard (on the left) in the ceiling of the hall (Rm 102). Note the dark soot/smoke/grease staining on the sides of the joist and on the floorboard, in contrast to the portion of the floorboard which lay over the joist. Note also the traces of whitewash. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

The beam casings showed a first applied layer of a dark brown color. It was not determined whether this was a paint or a layer of an oil stain, or heavy soot staining. However, the first painted layer on the casings in the parlor (Rm 112) was also a dark brown. While it is unlikely that a faux graining decorative treatment was applied in the hall, it is clear that some sort of an as yet unidentified dark brown finish was applied to the casings of the beams in hall, then covered by nearly a century of soot and smoke from the kitchen fireplace. (Figure 11.)

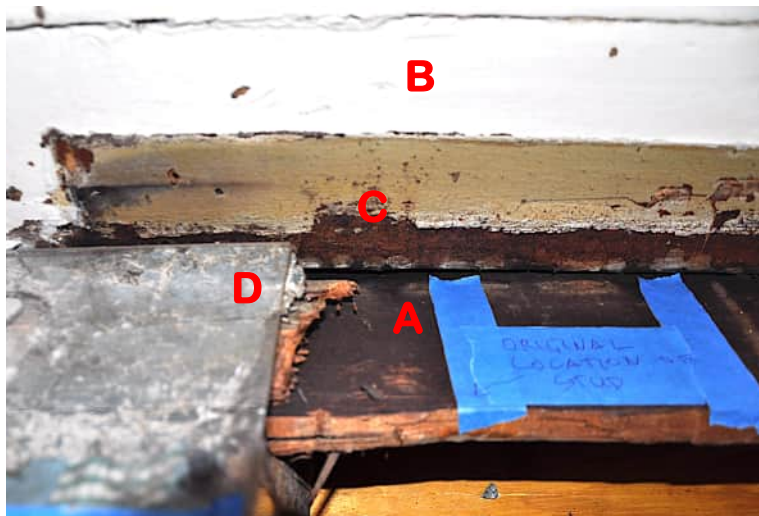


Figure 11.
Detail view of the north wall of the hall (Rm 102) over the doorway to the rear lean-to. **A** is the Phase 1 molded and lapped wall sheathing. It was covered by lath and plaster during Phase 2. **B** is the underside of the casing of the north wall girt; **C** is the first applied coating to the beam casing – a dark brown layer which was applied to the casing, followed by several Phase 2 layers. The yellow tan paint is the last Phase 2 paint applied before the casing was covered in this location in Phase 4 by a door architrave.; **D** is plaster applied over the Phase 1 wall sheathing in the early 19th century (Phase 2) over sawn- and

split lath fastened with early machine-cut nails to the wall sheathing in the early 19th century. The lath and plaster applied to the wall clearly covered the existing painted surface of the beam casing. The strip of tan yellow paint on the underside of the beam casing is the second paint layer on the casing. It was covered by a door casing applied during the second Federal Period improvements during Phases 3 or 4, when the entire door opening was enlarged in width and height. The widening of the doorway required the relocation of a wall stud several inches to the left. The original location of the stud is indicated by blue tape. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

Building archaeology undertaken during the present study in the hall (Rm 102) resulted in a different interpretation of the Phase 1 fenestration in this room. The 1992 SPNEA investigators misinterpreted the physical evidence they discovered in and around the doorway to the rear lean-to (now to Rm 109) as evidence of a window in the north wall in the location of this doorway. Similarly, evidence found during investigation of the south wall was interpreted as scars left by two small leaded casement windows (Figure 12).⁶⁷

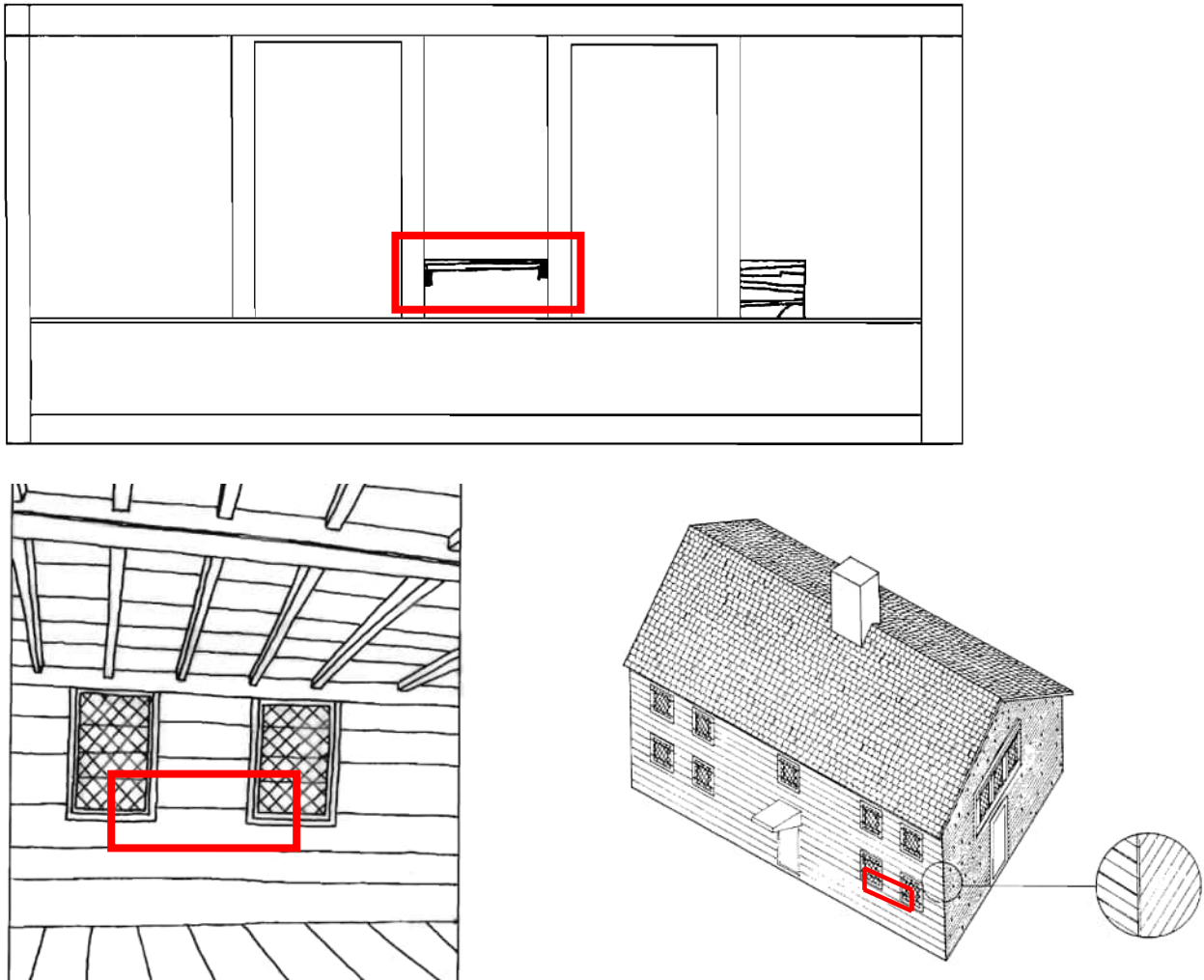


Figure 12. Top – conjectural drawing of the south wall of the hall (Rm 102) showing the discovery of what were believed to be notches cut into the Phase 1 wall sheathing for the sills of two Phase 1 leaded casement windows. (Clancey and Leeke, “Excavation 102-S, More Horizontal Sheathing and Evidence of Early Windows”, 1992.)

Bottom left – Conjectural drawing of Phase 1 windows in the south wall of the hall. (Clancey and Leeke, “Excavation 102-S, More Horizontal Sheathing and Evidence of Early Windows”, Image 102-31.)

Bottom Right – 1992 Conjectural drawing of the Phase 1 house. The evidence discovered in 1992 in the south wall of the hall led to the conclusion that all four rooms in the house had paired casement windows in the south wall. (Clancey and Leeke, “The Original House, 1725-1735”, 1992).

⁶⁷

The re-excavation of the 1992 excavation 102-S in the south wall of the hall (Figure Y) in 2025 revealed evidence which suggested that there may in fact have been banks of casement windows in the south elevation of the house for the rooms on the ground floor and second floor. **C** in Figure Y – a new board inserted above the surviving Phase 1 wall sheathing **A** – appears to have been installed to fill a former opening when the two smaller windows were installed. It is possible that the top edge of **A** marks the lower edge of an opening for a bank of casement windows like those found during Phase 1 on the gable ends of the house. If so, it is likely that similar windows existed on the south elevation in all four rooms. (Figure 13).

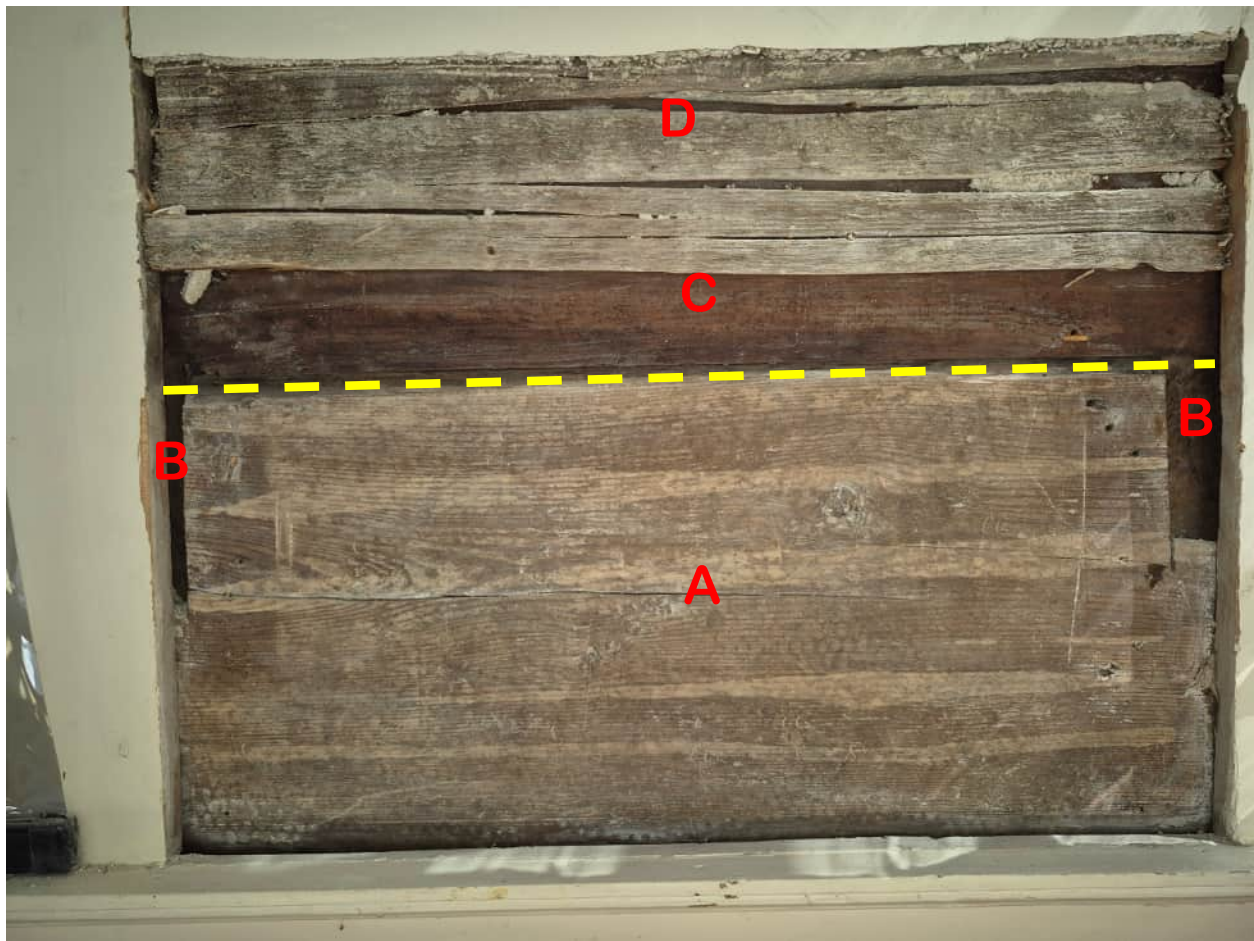


Figure 13. View of re-excavation of the 1992 “Excavation 102-S” executed on March 26, 2025 by Myron O. Stachiw. **A** is the Phase 1 horizontal board sheathing on the south wall of the hall between the present windows; **B** indicates the notches cut into the sheathing **A** for the sills of earlier windows; **C** is a newer board inserted above **A** to fill some sort of opening; **D** is sawn- and split lath attached with early machine-cut nails to **C** and **A**. Note the lime burns on **A** indicating that the lath **D** applied over **C** was also applied over **A**. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2025.)

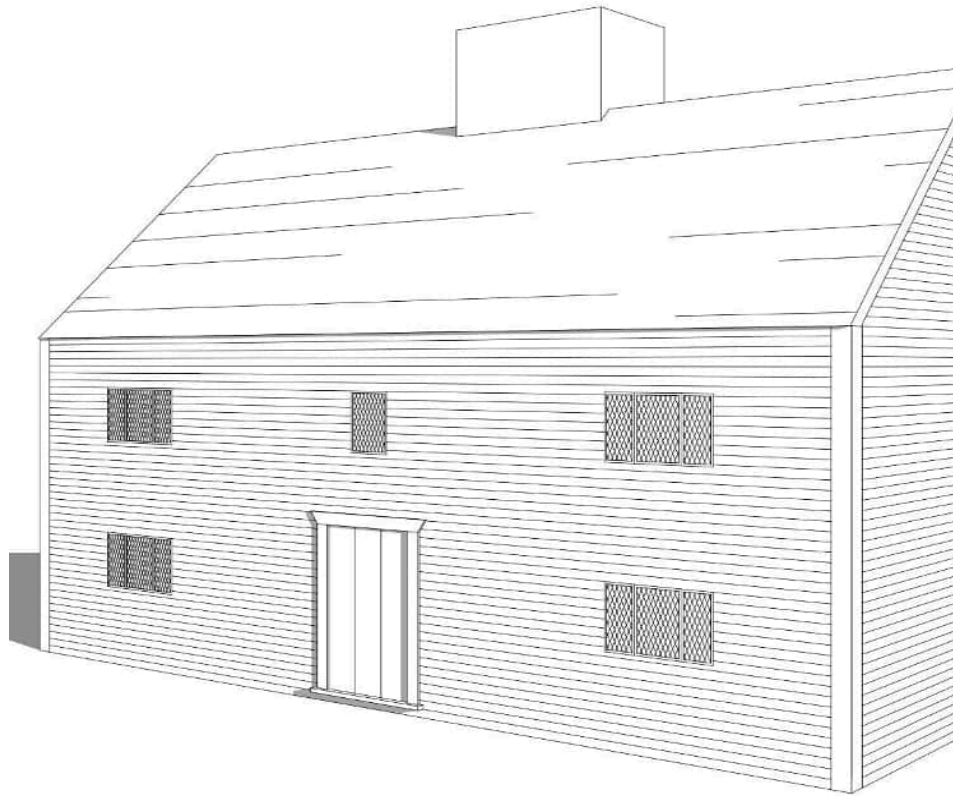


Figure 14. Front elevation of the 1698d. Deacon John Goodwin house in East Hartford, CT., showing banks of casement windows in its front elevation of the two ground-floor and second-floor rooms. It is unknown if the Parsons House had a similar small casement window on the second-floor landing over the front door, as this space is now occupied by a large double-hung sash window. (Drawing by Nevan Carling.)

The east wall of the hall (Rm 102), as projected in the SPNEA reconstruction (Figure 12, bottom right), was windowless. However, evidence of a doorway was discovered in the approximate middle of the gable-end wall. In the early 19th century this doorway was relocated about three feet to the north and the current window was inserted in this wall.

Evidence of a former small opening was discovered in the north wall of the hall, situated just to the west of the doorway to the rear lean-to. It is unclear whether this was an opening cut through the original Phase 1 interior wall sheathing for a small cupboard adjacent to the fireplace or for a small window opening, perhaps lacking glass, but secured only with a wooden shutter.⁶⁸ If the latter, it may signal that the lean-to erected behind the hall was not part of the original 1719 construction, but an addition at some later date. When the doorway was enlarged the west door stud was removed and reinstalled several inches to the west (Figure 15).



Figure 15. Left – View of the north wall of the hall (Rm 102), showing the current doorway to Rm 109 in the rear pile of the house. Throughout the 18th century a smaller doorway opening provided access to the rear lean-to in this same location. Its approximate dimensions and location are indicated by the dashed red lines. The area within the blue rectangle **A** indicates the location of the former opening for a small wall cupboard or window opening. This opening was originally bounded on its east side by a wall stud which was later relocated several inches to the west when the doorway was enlarged. The yellow dashed lines indicate the original location of a Phase 1 wall stud which was relocated several inches to the west when the door opening was enlarged during Phase 4.

Right – View of the former opening **A** from Rm 109, looking south. The stud visible at the left edge of the former opening was relocated to this position in the early 19th century when the doorway was enlarged during the second Federal Period remodeling of the hall. The lath and plaster which covered the former cupboard- or window opening was applied to the walls of the hall (Rm 102) during the first Federal Period remodeling (Phase 2). (Photographs by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

The exact function and finishes in the Phase 1 rear lean-to cannot be accurately described, as the structure has not existed for more than 200 years. However, such spaces survive in numerous “first period” houses and are often described in probate records of the period. As an unheated space connected to a kitchen, it likely functioned as an intermediate space between the dirty outdoors and the (slightly) cleaner indoors. It was a place where frequently-used tools and utensils were stored; where the cleaning and processing (and perhaps storage in some cases) of agricultural products occurred before undergoing final processing into food or cloth; and

numerous other activities which we cannot imagine. Unfortunately, the detailed probate inventory for Nathaniel³ Parsons executed on December 21, 1738, though very detailed in its listing of his personal estate, did not identify the location of these objects in the house or barn.⁶⁹ Unfortunately, no probate documents survive for Nathaniel⁴ Parsons, who died 13 November 1807, aged 74 years.

Uncertainty about the number of windows that existed on the house during the 18th century as interpreted in the 1992 SPNEA study was triggered after viewing data presented in the 1798 U.S. Direct Tax valuations for the town of Northampton.⁷⁰ This valuation described the house as being constructed of wood, two stories in height, with a foot print of 1000 square feet. The building was listed as having only seven windows containing 56 square feet of glass, with a very low assessed value of \$250. If we accept this data as accurate, a number of questions are raised as to the form and appearance of the house in 1798 when the tax data was collected. The 1992 SPNEA conjectural reconstruction of the house after the mid-18th century addition of the full rear lean-to illustrated a building with a footprint of 1200 square feet, consisting of the original Phase 1 structure - 40 feet by 20 feet- and the full rear lean-to -10 feet. x 40 feet (see Figure 12, bottom right image). In this reconstruction the building is presented as having at least twelve windows (counting each bank of casement windows as one window, and includes the two banks of casement windows on the west gable end of the house). This does not include any consideration of windows which may have been in the gable-end- and rear walls of the lean-to, although some of these may not have had windows with glass, but only wooden shutters. Local historian and chronicler Sylvester Judd noted c.1832 that “the house 50 years ago had diamond windows”, referring to diamond-paned casement windows.⁷¹ That would mean that the “diamond windows” were still in place c.1782, but it is certainly possible, based on the data in the 1798 Direct Tax valuation, that they were still in place in 1798 and perhaps into the early 19th century. If this is in fact the case, the 1992 interpretation is not correct.

The 1000 square foot footprint enumerated in the tax valuation may be explained by the continued presence of the smaller Phase 1 rear lean-to, which could easily have added 150 to 200 square feet to the 800 square feet of the house, as the location of its north- or rear wall is not known. This data, combined with the new physical and documentary evidence of the current study, supports the new interpretation that the removal of the leaded casement windows on the south, east, and west elevations of the house, their replacement with sash windows, and the construction of the full rear lean-to, were not carried out until the early 19th century. This also means that these alterations were accomplished not by members/residents of the Parsons family, but by the next owners, members of the family of Daniel Wright, who came into possession of the property in 1807-1808.

⁶⁹ Hampshire County Registry of Probate, Box 110, No. 27.

⁷⁰ The valuations are found in the Sylvester Judd Manuscript in the Forbes Library collections, accessed in digital format at https://archive.org/details/juddmanuscriptnojudd_0. For a summary of the data for Northampton dwellings and comparison with Parsons House data, see Appendix 2.

⁷¹ Sylvester Judd Manuscript, Northampton series, Vol. 1, p. 168.

The Parlor – Rm 112

The parlor occupied the ground floor room at the west end of the house. As far as determined to date, the room was accessed only from the central entry lobby, with no doorways to the side- or rear yards in the west or north walls during the 18th century. As in the hall (Rm 102), Phase 1 finishes remain relatively intact beneath later Federal Period additions and alterations on large portions of the north and west walls, primarily in the form of original Phase 1 lath and plaster, chair rail, and baseboards. A small section of the west wall between the present window and the doorway to Rm 111 also retains *in situ* remnants of the Phase 1 brick nogging, set in a fine gray clay which is very similar to the clay used to mix the wall- and ceiling plaster.

Physical evidence discovered during the 2024-2025 study strongly suggests that this room was not finished with its lathed and plastered walls and ceiling and the cased framing elements until the late 1720s or early 1730s, perhaps just before or soon after Nathaniel³'s 1728 marriage to his second wife, Abigail Bunce.



The removal of several floorboards in the chamber above the west parlor (Rm 210) revealed that the underside of the floorboards and framing members in the ceiling of the west parlor showed little or no smoke- or soot-staining. Although there was a fireplace in this room from the start, the absence of any significant accumulation of smoke residue on the surfaces of the framing members or on the underside of the overhead flooring indicates that the fireplace in this room was rarely used, if at all, until the ceiling of the room was lathed and plastered (Figure 16).

It is clear that the application of the lath to the ceiling of the parlor occurred prior to the application of the casings to the summer beam, girts along the four walls of the room, and the posts, and also prior to the application of the classically-inspired compound *cyma recta* and *cyma reversa* crown moldings and plaster on the walls (Figures 17 and 18).

Figure 16. Removal of the Phase 2 floorboards and Phase 1 floorboard **A** in the floor of Rm 210 (over the parlor Rm 112) revealed absence of any discoloration on the joists and underside of the floorboard **A** due to smoke and soot. The ship-lapped Phase 1 flooring **A** was covered in Phase 2 in the early 19th century with new square-edged pine boards. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024).



Figure 17. View of the casings applied to the posts and girts in the parlor (Rm 112) and the classically-inspired compound *cyma recta* and *cyma reversa* crown moldings applied over the girt- and summer beam casings. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)



Figure 18. View of the underside of the beam casing **A** on the north wall of the parlor after removal of Phase 1 plaster applied over riven lath. Note that the plaster butts against the unpainted surface of the beam casing. The casings and crown molding in this room were painted after the plaster was applied with what appeared to be a dark brown faux graining. Traces of this paint were found on the plaster beneath later whitewash layers adjacent to the casing. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

The plaster on both the walls and ceiling butts against the edges of the casings and the crown molding, indicating that those elements were already in place when the plaster was applied. Where the crown molding laps over the ceiling lath, there is no plaster on the lath.

When the building frame was assembled and raised c.1719, the owners/builders followed accepted design standards characteristic of “First Period” buildings – buildings constructed in the first century of the colonization of New England, deeply influenced and guided by traditional post-medieval building practices in England.⁷² The form of the building, its method of framing and joinery, and leaded casement windows all signal its membership in the classification of “First Period” buildings. A notable feature of this tradition is construction which left the framing of ceilings – joists, girts and summer beams – exposed, and often decorated with whitewash and occasionally with color accents. The massive summer beams were often embellished with flat or molded chamfers, and often with elaborate stops (Figure 19).

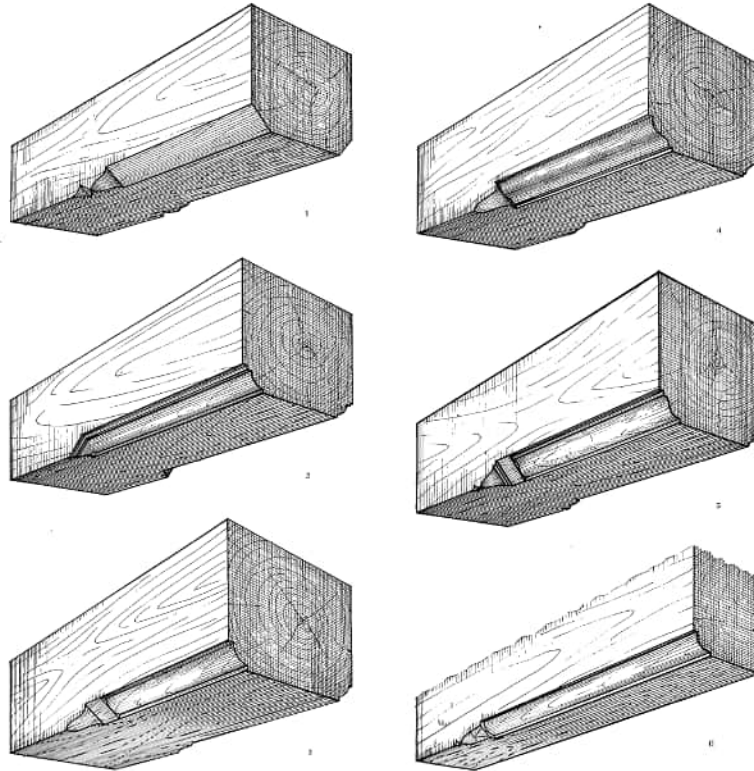


Figure 19.
Examples of decorative chamfers in beams found in “First Period” buildings in Massachusetts Bay Colony. The four summer beams in the Parsons House are decorated with flat chamfers with lamb’s tongue stops, similar to the example in the upper left corner. (Cummings, *The Framed Houses of Massachusetts Bay*, p. 159.)

The summer beams in the ceilings of each of the four Phase 1 rooms of the Parsons House were all decorated with flat chamfers and lamb’s tongue stops; clearly all were intended to remain exposed and seen. They remained exposed through the 18th century in the hall (Rm 102), hall

⁷² See the essay in the appendices to this report by Nevan Carling, “Placing the Parsons House: The Cultural and Ecological Context for Constructing a Connecticut River Valley House”, for a discussion of the Parsons House as an example of a “First Period” building in the evolving Connecticut River Valley vernacular building tradition. See also Abbot Lowell Cummings, for a comprehensive discussion of “First Period” building practices in *The Framed Houses of Massachusetts Bay, 1625-1725* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979).

chamber (Rm 202), and the parlor chamber (Rm 210); it was only in the parlor (Rm 112) that the major framing elements in the ceiling were covered by casings and lath and plaster.⁷³ Between the raising of the house c.1719 and the finishing of the parlor, Nathaniel³ Parsons apparently experienced awareness of an aesthetic shift in architectural styles and finishes from the traditional post-medieval forms to the new classically-inspired forms which came to be called the “Georgian” style. In the Parsons House this was expressed by the finishes applied to the parlor: casing of the posts and beams, including the chamfered summer beam; addition of the compound *cyma recta* and *cyma reversa* crown moldings to beam casings; plastering of the walls and ceiling; and application of a molded chair rail and plain baseboards around the room.⁷⁴

However, other elements of the room, such as evidence of a bank of casement windows in the west wall discovered during the 1992 study, remained through the 18th century (Figures 20 and 21). The former opening was defined after plaster was removed from the wall to reveal the limits of newer sawn- and split lath, fastened with machine-cut nails, in the area formerly occupied by the larger bank of casement windows. The lath applied on the north side of the present window to fill the former large opening for the bank of casement windows is reused exterior window molding, likely trim which surrounded the casement windows or trim from the earliest sash windows applied to south elevation and replaced with the larger present sash windows.

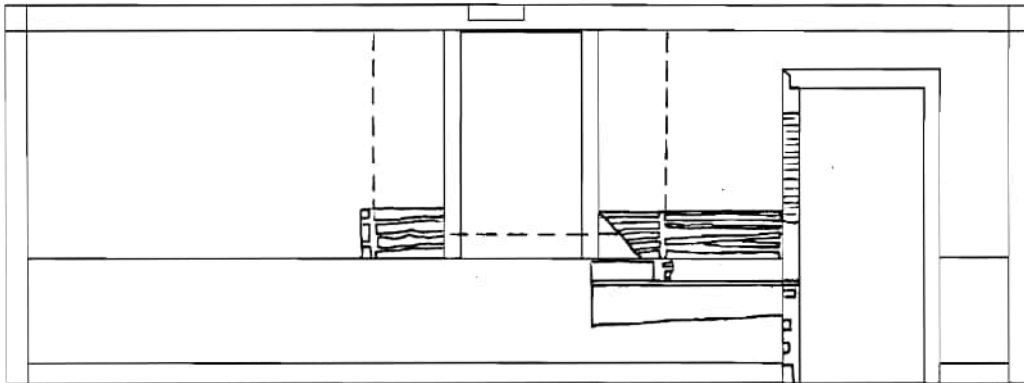


Figure 20. Drawing of the interior west wall of the parlor (Rm 112) and excavations undertaken in 1992 to define a bank of casement windows. The former window opening is defined by the dashed lines on either side of the existing early 19th century window. (Clancey and Leeke, “Excavation 112-A”, 1992.)

⁷³ It is significant to note that the floor joists in the ceiling of Rm 112 were not hand-planed, but were installed with the rough sawing marks from the sawmill. This clearly indicates that they were intended from the start to be covered with lath and plaster, even though the summer beam was meant to be exposed. This was not an unusual First Period treatment of the best room of a house. However, the plaster was not applied to the lath until after the crown moldings were applied to the beam casings over the lath. This strongly implies that the lathing and plastering of the ceilings and the application of the crown molding represented a change of plans and occurred some years after the original 1719 erection of the house.

⁷⁴ The impetus for this new treatment may have come from Nathaniel³'s new bride, or from his younger brother Jonathan³. Trained as a housewright, Jonathan would more likely have been aware of changing tastes and the details of the new architectural style. No information is available on how the chimney breast wall was finished at this time, as the fabric of the entire wall was replaced with a new paneled wall during the first Federal Period remodeling in the early 19th century.

On the exterior of the west wall, removal of clapboards revealed the exterior scar of the bank of casement windows. Original Phase 1 weatherboard siding, fastened with rose-head wrought nails, surrounded the former large opening for the bank of casement windows beneath the current early 19th century weatherboards. The former casement window opening was filled with reused, finished boards which it was speculated may have come from the removed Phase 1 chimney breast wall when it was replaced with the new paneled wall in the early 19th century.



Figure 21. View of the excavation on the exterior of the west wall of Rm 112 revealing the extent of the opening B for the former Phase 1 bank of casement windows. (Clancey and Leeke, "Excavation EXT-W1 (West Wall)", 1992.)

The Phase 1 plaster on the parlor walls was quite distinctive. It had a gray tint to it, likely the result of a gray clay mixed in, together with coarsely ground lime, with cow hair and large amounts of grass as binders. The use of grass was a surprising discovery. A large sample of grass was taken from the plaster and sent for accelerator mass spectrometry Carbon 14 dating. The results supported an early 18th century date range which more or less coincided with the early 18th century date acquired through dendrochronology dating of the buildings timbers.⁷⁵

Physical investigations and excavations in the second-floor chambers in 1993 and in 2025 were limited to removal of several floor boards (in Rms 202 and 210 - see Figures 16 and 10) and removal of lath and plaster on the west and south walls of the parlor chamber (Rm 210). The

⁷⁵ The sample of grass was sent to Beta Analytic LLC, a firm in Miami, FL. Result indicated a date range of 1684 – 1735. (See Appendix 7.) Botanists at the University of Massachusetts-Amherst identified the grass as the following: two species of grass were present, *Festuca filiformis* and *Festuca trachyphylla*. Both are imports from Europe, but are believed to have been well-established in the northeastern U.S. by the time the house was built; both were used as turfgrass. Personal communication, Joshua Lanier, 12 December 2025; identification by UMass grass taxonomist Dennis Magee.

1992 excavation through the west wall confirmed a large former opening for a bank of casement windows, like that in the west wall of the parlor below, and also made the discovery that there was no evidence of any earlier finishes having been applied to the walls of the room based on the absence of nail holes from earlier sheathing or lath. The 2025 excavations were carried out on the south wall near the southwest corner post in an attempt to confirm the 1992 finding of no earlier finishes and to document the wall framing. The early 19th century sawn- and split lath was removed, nail holes from this lath were marked, and it was concluded that indeed there was no evidence of any earlier application of lath or sheathing to the walls (Figure 22). It also was noted that there was no clear evidence that the brick nogging found in the west wall of the parlor was ever installed in any of the second-floor rooms.



Figure 22. View of the 2025 excavation through the south wall of Rm 210. The early 19th century plaster and sawn- and split lath were removed, and the nail holes left by the early machine-cut nails which fastened the lath were marked. No extraneous nail holes from earlier finishes were discovered, supporting the conclusion reached by the investigators during the 1992 study that the walls of the second-floor rooms remained unfinished through the 18th century. Investigation of the ceiling in this room from the attic revealed that the sawn- and split lath applied to the ceiling in this room were not nailed to the underside of the attic floor joists, but to nailers suspended several inches below the joists. This allowed examination of the undersides of the attic floor joists; no nail holes from any earlier lath or board sheathing were discovered, confirming that the two second-floor rooms did not receive lath and plaster ceilings until the early 19th century, probably at the same time that the walls of these rooms were lathed and plastered. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw 2025.)

Why were the rooms in the Parsons house - other than the parlor and the hall - left in an unfinished state with leaded casement windows through the remainder of the 18th century? The answers to these questions may never be known, but a possible explanation may lie in the family dynamics over the next two generations.

Nathaniel³ died in 1738, at the age of 52, only a decade after his marriage to Abigail Bunce and a decade or so after the improvements were made to the parlor. Nathaniel³'s father, Jonathan² Parsons, died Oct.-Nov. 1694 at the age of 37, and left his house, house lot, and about 45 acres of meadow and tillage to his young sons. Both Jonathan² and his son Nathaniel³ were small-scale yeomen farmers who left widows with young children and limited resources. Nathaniel³ left three young children, who continued to live in the house with their families after their marriage. At one point in the late 1770s the house was occupied by 5 adults and 10 children.

And then Massachusetts and the other colonies began a war for independence after nearly a decade of economic pressure and occupation by British imperial officials and troops, resulting in harder economic times upon already hard times. In Massachusetts, and especially in western Massachusetts, the conclusion of the War for Independence was followed by an economic depression, the result of which was a popular armed uprising against rising taxes and property foreclosures known as Shays Rebellion. It is therefore possible that the occupants of the Parsons House from the 1740s through the 1780s and 1790s were in no financial condition to improve their house. The data from the 1798 Direct Tax certainly suggests that the two-story Parsons House, with only seven windows and valued at only \$250, was an old house that had not experienced much improvement since its construction in 1719. In contrast, the house of Daniel Wright, a middling merchant, located across Bridge Street from the Parsons House, was described in the 1798 Direct Tax as a two-story, wood dwelling house with a footprint of 2100 square feet, with 29 windows containing 392 square feet of glass, valued by the assessors at \$1300.

Phase 2– c.1800 – 1816 – Erection of a new rear lean-to, and the first Federal Period remodeling of the house.

Summary

The first improvement undertaken during Phase 2 was the replacement of the banks of casement windows – at least those on the front elevation facing Bridge Street – with paired sash windows in each of the four rooms of the house. The removal of the Phase 1A rear lean-to erected behind the hall/kitchen (Rm 102) followed; it was replaced with a new one-story lean-to which extended across the entire rear of the house, giving a saltbox-form to the north slope of the roof.

Dendrochronological evaluation of timbers in the large rear lean-to yielded only one reliable date for the felling of the white oak tree from which the timber was hewn - 1725 (Sample NP-61) - indicating that this timber, and perhaps other elements of the lean-to frame which did not yield reliable dates of felling– may have been part of the Phase 1 lean-to and were reused in the present lean-to.⁷⁶ The construction of the large rear lean-to was accompanied by the replacement of the original chimney, with a firebox added to the west parlor chamber (Rm 210), and two new kitchen fireplaces with bake ovens outside of the firebox created on the ground floor. One firebox and oven opened into the old hall/kitchen (Rm 102) and the other into the large central room of the new rear lean-to (Rm 109). The partition of space in the rear lean-to – one large central room with one of the new fireplaces and bake ovens, and two smaller spaces at the east and west ends of the lean-to – essentially gave the house the standard floor plan of a double-pile, center-chimney house. The presence of two cooking fireplaces, each with a bake oven, can be explained by the fact that after 1811, when Ferdinand Hunt Wright, the son of Daniel Wright, married, the house was then occupied by two households: Daniel Wright and his wife Chloe and several of their daughters, and Daniel’s son Ferdinand Hunt Wright and his wife. It is suggested that this new living situation was the likely reason for the replacement of the chimney and creation of two kitchens.

The dismantling of the Phase 1 chimney and erection of the new chimney required full access to the space occupied by the old and new chimneys. This meant the dismantling of the existing Phase 1 chimney breast walls in the parlor, hall/kitchen, and parlor chamber, and rebuilding them after the new chimney, fireboxes, and ovens were completed. This initiated the following improvements:

- the Phase 1 chimney breast wall treatments in the west parlor (Rm 112) and the hall/kitchen (Rm 102) were replaced with new Federal-style floor-to-ceiling paneling; in the parlor chamber (Rm 210) - where there had not been a fireplace during Phase 1 – the chimney breast wall was completed with lath and plaster, two new built-in wall cabinets/closets on the north side of the new firebox, and a simple mantelpiece;
- new, larger sash windows were installed throughout the house, replacing the smaller paired sash windows which earlier had replaced the banks of casement windows on the front elevation, and the casement windows on the gable ends;

⁷⁶ Flynt, “A Dendrochronology Study of Select Timbers from the Nathaniel Parsons House, Northampton, Massachusetts”, 2024, p. 12. (See Appendix 4.)

- lath and plaster, and simple board wainscot and chair rails were applied to the walls of the hall/kitchen and parlor; plaster and woodwork were painted; later, wallpaper was applied to the plastered walls;
- lath and plaster were eventually applied to the walls and ceilings of the second-floor landing and the second-floor chambers (Rms 201, 202, and 210); a new chair rail (in Rm 210) and wood trim were applied to windows and doorways in the second-floor rooms; eventually Rm 202 was divided into two rooms (now Rms 202 and 203);
- the Phase 1 doorway in the east wall of the hall/kitchen was relocated several feet to the north, and a window like those installed on the south elevation was installed south of the former Phase 1 doorway;
- in the hall/kitchen the three new, larger windows were outfitted with sliding interior shutters;
- a shallow wall cupboard was built at the north end of the chimney breast wall in the hall/kitchen just to the north of the new fireplace and bake oven;
- the Phase 1 staircase in the front entry lobby (Rm 101) was replaced with a simple, yet more stylish form; the Phase 1 east wall of the entry lobby was dismantled, and was replaced with vertical and horizontal boards around the doorway which were stiles and rails of the new paneled chimney breast wall in the hall/kitchen; the walls in the entry lobby were lathed with sawn- and split lath, fastened with early machine cut nails, and plastered.

Discussion

The description of the Parsons House as presented in the 1798 U.S. Direct Tax enumeration of the building's characteristics and its low valuation (\$250) presents a picture of an old-fashioned, 80-year-old house. It's two-story, timber-framed, central-chimney, gable-roofed form, with a small rear lean-to, heavily-weathered and unpainted exterior sheathing, and its original leaded-glass casement windows – features of an ambitious house in 1719 - had not changed or undergone any significant improvements since it was erected.⁷⁷

It appears that the first changes made to the house during Phase 2 involved the removal of the casement windows – at least those on the front- or south elevation – and their replacement with paired, closely-spaced sash windows in each of the first and second-floor rooms facing what is now Bridge Street. Physical evidence of these windows was discovered in the hall (Rm 102) during the 1992 SPNEA study of the Parsons House, and that evidence was interpreted as representing the location of original Phase 1 windows (see Figure11).⁷⁸

⁷⁷ The entry for Nathaniel Parsons' house in the 1798 U.S. Direct Tax enumeration for Northampton described it as a two-story wood building, with a footprint of 1000 square feet, seven windows containing 56 square feet of glass, and an assessed value of \$250. Sylvester Judd Manuscript, Forbes Library Collections, accessed in digital format at https://archive.org/details/juddmanuscriptnojudd_0. See also Appendix 2.

⁷⁸ This conclusion is surprising, given that they also discovered unquestionable evidence that banks of casement windows had existed in the gable ends, two in the west gable end (one on each floor), and one in the east gable end (on the second floor) of the house. A more common pattern in "ambitious" houses of the late 17th- and early 18th century would have been placement of banks of casement windows on the primary façade, and perhaps smaller or equal banks of casement windows on the gable ends.

The size of these “new” window openings is clear only in the vertical dimension – 31 inches between the sill and top rail of the applied window frame – as the horizontal dimension of these window openings was obliterated by the installation of the present larger sash windows. If 6-inch by 6-inch panes of glass were present in the sash (this is the size of the glass in the present second-floor windows) they would have allowed two sash, one of 6 panes (2 rows of three), the other of 9 panes (3 rows of three), with two 1-inch-wide stiles in each sash. This would result in a window opening of approximately 23 inches in width by 31 inches in height. The interval between the paired window openings was approximately 18 to 20 inches.⁷⁹

Selective removal of existing weatherboards from the south elevation of the house in 2025, as well as removal of plaster and lath from the interior side of the south walls of the hall/kitchen and the parlor chamber revealed more evidence of the existence of these earlier paired windows, confirming that they existed on both floors and in both the east- and west rooms (Figures 23, 24, 25).



Figure 23.

Location of the evidence on the interior or exterior walls of the south elevation of the Parsons House for earlier paired sash windows. Although evidence for similar windows in the west ground-floor room (parlor - Rm 112) was obliterated by later improvements, it is very likely that identical windows existed there. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2025).

⁷⁹ The actual dimension of the window openings in the south elevation of the four rooms might be determined from the interior by exposing the top face of the beams below and above the window openings to reveal the location of original stud mortises. This was not possible during this project for a number of reasons; baseboard heating elements along the south wall in the second-floor rooms and cased beams above the window openings in all four rooms proved too intrusive to remove. Another option is the removal of exterior weatherboards and siding to reveal the beams above and below the window openings. It is highly recommended that in the event that the south elevation weatherboards and wall sheathing will be removed in the future, examination of evidence in these beams be undertaken to provide more clarity about the fenestration history of the house.



Figure 24.

View of the space between the two existing windows of the east chamber (Rm 202). Note the four notches (marked **A**) cut through the Phase I sheathing. (See also Figures 12 and 13). These notches accommodated the projecting ends of the top rails and sills of the joined window frames. On the exterior, these projecting ends of the rails and sills lapped over studs in the walls and allowed the window frames to be secured to the studs with nails. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2025).

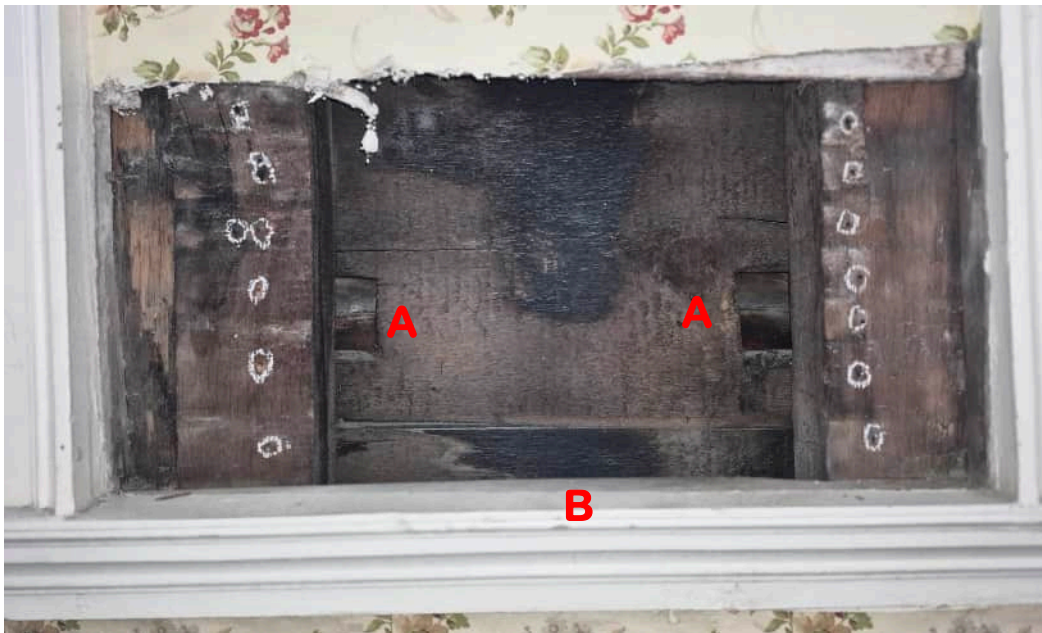


Figure 25. View of the south wall of the parlor chamber (Rm 210) between the two existing windows. The two notches in the exterior sheathing (marked **A**) were made to accommodate the sills of the two windows which occupied a portion of the space now occupied by the present windows to either side of the image. Note that the earlier windows were spaced more closely together than the existing windows. In addition, the sills of the earlier windows were approximately six inches higher than the present window sills, which are formed by the existing chair rail (**B**). (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2025.)

While the physical evidence of these earlier windows can be interpreted in more than one way, the combination of documentary evidence, physical evidence, and the key principle of archaeological stratigraphy – the law of superposition⁸⁰ - lead to a single conclusion: that the installation of the windows evidenced by the notches cut in the interior- and exterior sheathing on the south elevation of the house occurred after 1798, but before the major Federal Period improvements to the house. The documentary record (1798 U.S. Direct Tax data) clearly indicates that the four sets of paired windows which existed on the south elevation - two windows in each of the four rooms of the house – did not exist in 1798. The enumeration for the house of Nathaniel Parsons listed only seven windows. Given the three banks of casement windows which existed on the east- and west gable ends of the house, that left only four windows for the rest of the entire house. As no solid evidence was found for windows (or at least windows with glass) on the rear- or north wall of the house, those four windows must have existed on the front (south) elevation. However, the physical evidence indicates that at least eight windows existed on the front elevation prior to the existing windows.

Physical evidence leads to the conclusion that replacement of the casement windows and installation of the first set of paired sash windows was indeed a separate campaign which preceded the major remodeling of the hall and parlor and installation of the present larger sash windows. The big questions are when was this work undertaken, and who were the owners of the property at that time.

Much internal debate has occurred on whether the Phase 2 changes – from the replacement of the casement windows, erection of the new rear lean-to and new chimney, and remodeling of many of the rooms in the house - occurred during the last years of the Parsons family ownership (1798-1807), or during the first decade or two of ownership by members of the Wright family, who purchased the property in 1807/08. The possibility exists that the replacement of the casement windows – at least those on the south elevation of the house – had been accomplished by the Parsons family, while the major rebuilding and remodeling projects were most certainly undertaken during Wright family ownership and occupation. During the final decade of the Parsons occupation and for most of the first two decades of the Wright family ownership and occupation the building was home to multiple-generation family units. In the final decade of Parsons ownership the house was occupied by the elderly parents Nathaniel⁴ and Abigail Parsons and their young adult unmarried children; later with several unmarried children as well as a married son and his wife and young child; and then for several years by the elderly parents and two married sons and their young families. As Nathaniel⁵ and Luther⁵ married in 1801 and 1806, respectively, and began their own families, they may have undertaken the change in the

⁸⁰ The Law of Superposition states that older strata/materials lie beneath/behind new materials in undisturbed contexts. The Law of Stratigraphical Succession states that in an undisturbed sequence of rock or archaeological layers, each unit is older than the one above it and younger than the one below it. Based on the principle of superposition, it dictates that the lowest layers are the oldest. See Edward C. Harris, *Principles of Archaeological Stratigraphy* (London & New York: Academic Press., 1979); David Simmons, Myron O. Stachiw, John Worrell, "The Total Site Matrix: Strata and Structure at the Bixby House," in *Practices of Archaeological Stratigraphy*, eds. Edward C. Harris and Marley Brown III (London: Academic Press, 1993); Martin Davies, "The Application of the Harris Matrix to the Recording of Standing Structures", in Brown, Marley R., and Edward C. Harris, *Practices of Archaeological Stratigraphy* (London: Academic Press, 1993); David Simmons, Myron O. Stachiw, John Worrell, "Archaeology From the Ground Up," in *Historical Archaeology and the Study of American Culture*, eds. Lu Ann De Cunzo and Bernard L. Herman, (Winterthur Museum, 1996); and Brown, Marley R., and Edward C. Harris, *Practices of Archaeological Stratigraphy* (London: Academic Press, 1993).

fenestration of the house as a first step in the improvement of the old-fashioned house. However, the deaths of their mother and father in 1806 and 1807, followed by the separate sales of their inherited half-interests in the property in 1807 and 1808, suggest a significant rift - perhaps financial and/or relational – within the family. The result was the complete departure from Northampton by Luther⁵ and his family, while Nathaniel⁵ and his family moved to another part of Northampton.

In the first decade of Wright ownership and occupation the elderly parents Daniel and Chloe Wright occupied the house with their two teen-aged daughters and Daniel's unmarried, young adult son from a previous marriage, Ferdinand Hunt Wright, for some part of that time. Careful reconstruction of the financial trajectories of the Parsons and Wright families during the late 18th- and early 19th centuries (see sections B and D above) strongly suggest that most aspects of the first Federal Period remodeling campaign (Phase 2) and all of the second campaign (Phases 3 and 4) were carried out during the Wright family ownership/occupation of the house.⁸¹

The concrete physical evidence that the window replacement occurred prior to and separate from the other major improvements undertaken throughout the house in the early 19th century is represented by several important clues:

- the position of the new windows on the wall and their relationship to the key elements of the series of improvements made during the first Federal Period remodeling. Figures 23, 24, and 25 clearly indicate that the window sills of the new windows were located several inches above the sills of the present larger windows which were installed together with the wainscot and chair rails.
- The lath and plaster exposed in the excavations was clearly applied to the walls during the phase of construction which saw the installation of the larger sash windows with their wide molded architraves, wainscot, and chair rails, components that are contemporary with the installation of the paneled chimney breast walls and other improvements following the construction of the rear lean-to and new chimney. Some of the lath applied to the interior walls of the parlor around the new window openings were reused exterior door- and window trim, linking the window replacement with the major Phase 2 changes.
- The earliest paint stratigraphies on the various elements of the Phase 2 first Federal Period remodeling in the hall/kitchen - paneled chimney breast wall, wainscot, post- and beam casings, door- and window architraves – are consistent, indicating that they are of a single construction/remodeling phase, separate from the installation of the windows which first replaced the casements on the south wall of the house.

⁸¹ Nancy Rexford, Director of Historic Northampton (2013-2016), included the following statement in an essay “History of Parsons House Residents” which she authored in 2015:

About the time of this marriage, [1811 marriage of Ferdinand Hunt Wright to Olive Ames] according to family tradition, “an ell was built containing a new kitchen with the great fireplace and bake oven of that time. A new well was dug, the lean-to [roof] was taken away, making better rooms upstairs; the leaded sashes were removed and tiny six-inch panes of wavy glass put in.”

Unfortunately, no citation was provided for the source of this “family tradition”. The “family tradition”, while mentioning a number of the physical changes identified in the studies undertaken in 1992 and 2024-25, provides a questionable chronology of their execution. However, what is important about this “memory” is the attribution of these changes to the Wright family period of ownership.

Phase 2 - c.1800 – 1816

Room-by Room Descriptions

The Rear Lean-to

A new rear lean-to replaced the smaller Phase 1 rear lean-to (see Figure 4) behind the hall/kitchen (Rm 102). The construction of the new lean-to, which extended along the entire rear- or north wall of the Phase 1 house, initiated a major remodeling campaign over the next 20-30 years which resulted in the present overall configuration of the house and its ells and wings. Late-19th century photographs show a one-story timber-framed structure – perhaps a woodshed and/or stable – attached to the north end of the c. 1830-40 rear kitchen ell (Phase 5). As it was removed in the early 20th century, it was not possible to determine exactly when it was built, but it may very well have been erected at the same time as the rear kitchen ell.

The new lean-to gave the house a saltbox shape – one story in height at its north wall – with a long, sloping roof that descended from the rear plate of the Phase 1 house down to the north rear plate of the lean-to, giving the house what is known as a saltbox form (Figures 26A, B).

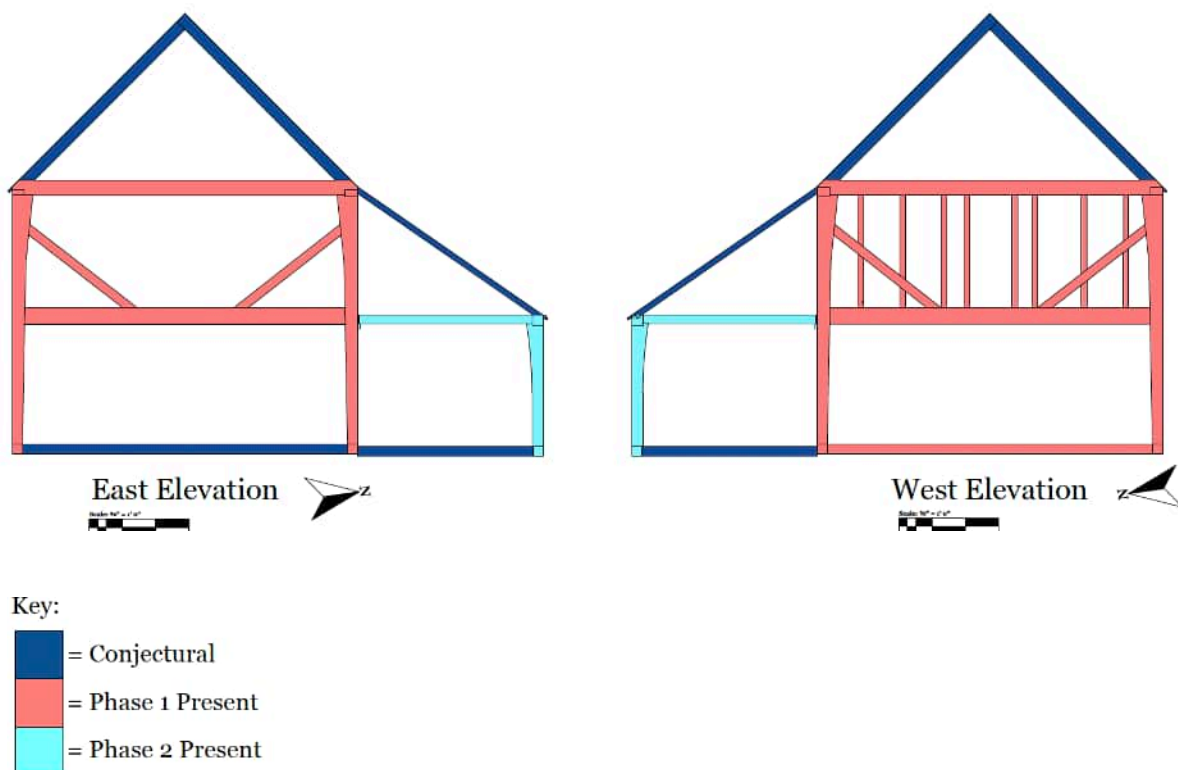


Figure 26A. Framing drawings of the east and west elevations of the Phase 2 house and rear lean-to. The absence of studs in the drawings indicates wall areas that were not accessible during this project, and thus did not allow measurement and representation of the framing members in these walls. (Drawings by Nevan Carling.)

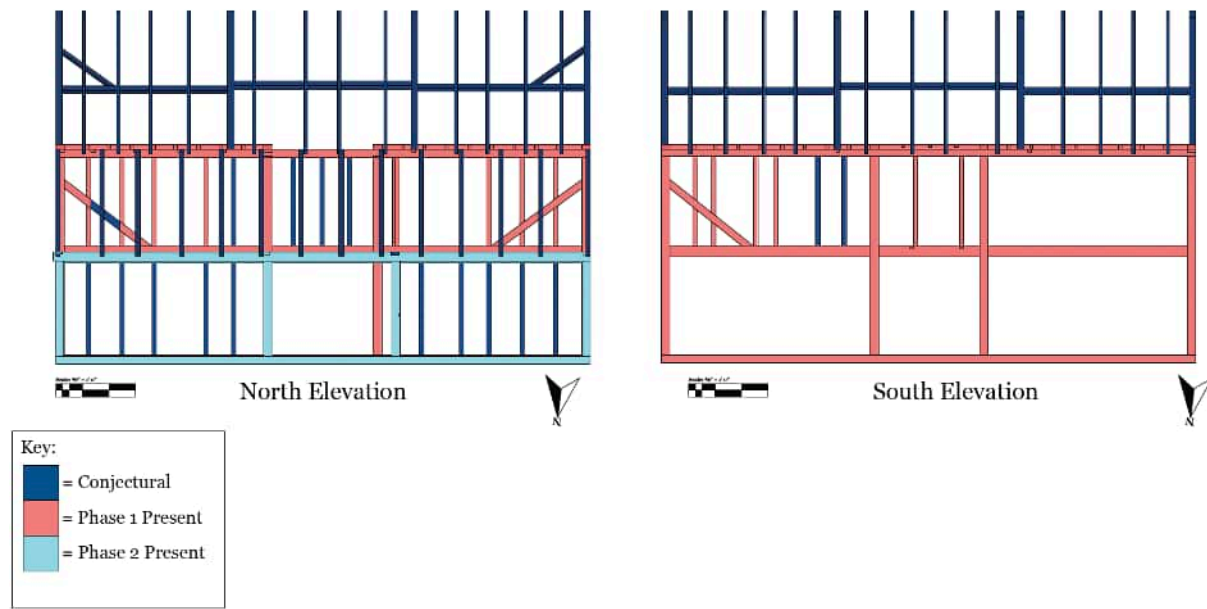


Figure 26B. Framing drawings of the north and south elevations of the Phase 2 house and rear lean-to. The pink framing elements represent existing (2026) parts of the Phase 1 house frame; the dark blue framing elements represent the Phase 1 roof of the house (which remained in place during Phase 2), the Phase 2 lean-to roof rafters, and studs in the walls of the house and in the Phase 2 lean-to; and the light blue elements represent the existing parts of the Phase 2 rear lean-to frame. The dark blue elements either no longer exist – in which case their reconstruction is based on physical evidence, thus labeled “conjectural” or their location is based on limited physical evidence. The spaces in the south elevation of the house where no framing members are shown indicates that these parts of the building were inaccessible during this study, and not that these framing elements do not exist. (Drawings by Nevan Carling.)

The rear plate of the lean-to is a single timber, extending 40 feet from one end to the other. The lean-to rafters were pegged into step mortises at their lower end into the rear plate of the lean-to (Figure 27). The upper ends of the lean-to rafters likely were lapped over the edge of the roof sheathing and nailed to the Phase 1 roof sheathing, as no additional mortises were cut into the Phase 1 house plate for the lean-to rafters.

The space beneath the sloping roof of the lean-to above the finished ground-floor rooms was likely unfinished attic space. It is unclear whether this space was accessed from the ground floor of the lean-to or only from one- or both of the second-floor chambers. It was not unusual for attic space to be used for storage or as a bedroom in the 17th – 19th centuries.



Figure 27. View of the north- or rear plate of the Phase 2 lean-to. Two step-mortises for the rafter feet of the Phase 2 lean-to roof rafters are indicated by X. Note the pegs which fastened the lower end of the rafters to the plate still in place in these mortises. The lower ends of a post and several studs are visible above the plate forming the south wall of the second-story rooms created when the Phase 2 rear lean-to was raised to two full stories in 1816 (Phase 3). (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

The rear lean-to was accessed from Phase 1 house through doorways in the north walls of the hall/kitchen and parlor. It was necessary to step down about 6 to 8 inches to the floor of the lean-to from the parlor and hall/kitchen. This was obviously an original configuration, and remains to this day, as the floor of the firebox and hearthstone of the fireplace, and the wooden floor throughout the rear pile of the house - the former Phase 2 lean-to - are still at this lower level. Most of the original ceiling framing of the lean-to survives, consisting of four hewn girts and hand-planed and beaded joists. The joists and the undersides of the floorboards above, where enclosed and protected from later alterations, reveal that they were originally whitewashed (Figure 28).



Figure 28.
View of the Phase 2 ceiling in the rear lean-to over Rm 103. Looking up at the underside of the flooring above and a floor joist, The ceiling lath and plaster in this space was removed during the late 20th century improvements. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

Original stud wall framing survives in the west wall; the north wall framing of studs and diagonal braces rising from the east- and west corner posts to the rear plate also remains largely intact. The east wall of the lean-to was completely removed when the east wing was constructed as part of the Phase 4 improvements.

The interior walls of the lean-to were sheathed with wide pine boards applied horizontally or vertically to the studded walls, planed smooth, lapped and beaded, and fastened with wrought nails. These remain largely intact on the west and north walls, and on the western half of the south wall. Their earliest paint color was a yellow ochre, likely applied during Phase 2. (Figure 29).



Figure 29. View of the horizontal, molded board sheathing on the north wall of Rm 104. These sheathing boards are continuous past the staircase and wall at left into Rm 109, suggesting that the rear staircase to the second floor and the room partitions across the rear lean-to were created after the walls were fully sheathed. The yellow dashed line indicates the location of a vertical scribe line on the surface of the sheathing boards which coincides with the location of the east wall of the original Phase 3- and present staircase. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

The original partitioning of the rear lean-to has not been conclusively determined, and no surviving traces of these Phase 2 partition walls have been identified; the existing partitions forming the small west room (Rm 110) and a small east room (now occupied by a staircase and parts of Rms 103 and 104) likely date to Phase 3 when the second-story rooms were added and finished. The existing rear staircase to the second floor, rising along the west wall of Rm 104, was created in the 1980s, but it was built in the same location as an early staircase, removed in the early 20th century, but created in Phase 3 when the rear lean-to was raised to two full stories (Figures 29, 30.)



Figure 30.

Left - View of the east wall of the staircase from Rm 109 on the ground floor to the lean-to garret during Phase 2 and/or to the second floor of the rear pile during Phase 3. This wall is in its original location and reveals the location of the staircase before its removal in the early 20th century and re-erection about six feet to the west in Rm 109. The blue lines indicate the paint scars on the vertical-board east wall of the treads and risers of the staircase. The stairs on the left side of the image above the earlier stair scar were erected in 1981 during a major phase of

improvements and rearrangement of the rear pile rooms. The yellow dashed line indicates the lower edge of the stair stringer based on the scar on the whitewashed board on the right. The scars in the whitewash indicate that the whitewash under the stairs was applied after the stairs were erected. Scars for two shelves under the stairs are visible on the whitewashed board on the right.

Above right – Photograph looking east in Rm 109 after the relocated rear staircase and the early 20th century bathroom were removed and the new staircase (in the location of the original stairs) was erected with and a new bathroom on the east side of the new staircase. The wall containing the scar of a staircase in the photograph now forms the west wall of the existing staircase. It had formed the east wall of the early 20th century relocated staircase, and was reused to form the west wall enclosing the new staircase. Thus the visible scar is from the early 20th century stair and not from the Phase 2-3 staircase. (Photographs by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)



Figure 31. View of the east side of the remnants of vertical boards **A** which formed the east wall of the Phase 3 staircase. The vertical boards forming this wall were nailed to the east side of the joist with Type 2 machine-cut nails. Note that the unpainted vertical boards were applied over whitewash on the joists and ceiling boards. The lath and plaster ceiling were created after the staircase was in place, made evident by the unpainted section of the vertical boards above the level of the plaster ceiling. A nailer for the lath was applied over the vertical boards at joist level (removed at the time of this photograph). This nailer was a reused element. It was painted with a yellow/ochre distemper paint, the first-generation paint on the sheathing, providing further evidence that the staircase was likely erected during Phase 3 rather than Phase 2. The plaster ceiling in this space was removed in the late 20th century when a bathroom was created in this space, and several of the vertical boards were sawn off at the level of the joists to create a passageway into the new bathroom. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

The ceiling joists and the two interior girts in the ceiling of the ground floor rooms of the former rear lean-to do not appear to have been joined to the north wall of the Phase 1 frame. Instead, a ledger board was nailed to the north side of the studs and posts of the Phase 1 house north wall, several inches below the girt between the ground-floor and second-floor of the house, and the joists and the two interior girts rest upon this narrow ledger board (Figures 32, 33). At the rear wall of the lean-to, in the former rear plate of the lean-to, the joists are seated in butt-cog mortises, while the north ends of the two interior girts lap over the rear plate and rest in half-dove-tail mortises.

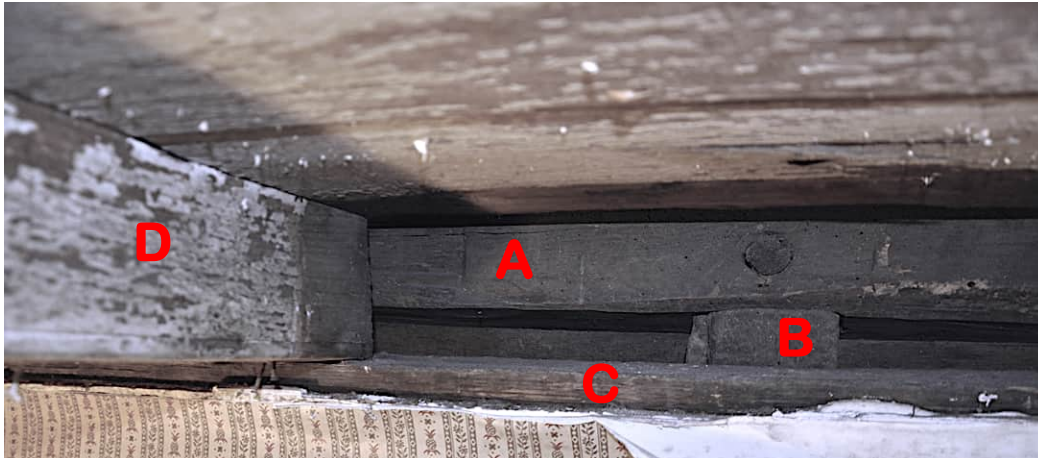


Figure 32. View of the south wall of Rm 103 in the rear lean-to showing the relationship of the Phase 2 ceiling framing to the rear (north) wall of the Phase 1 house frame. **A** is the lower half of the rear girt between the ground floor and the second floor of the Phase 1 house; **B** is the top end of a stud in the rear wall frame of the house, secured with a peg; **C** is a ledger board which measures approximately 3 inches by 3 inches in cross section, nailed to the wall studs of the house just below the level of the girt; **D** is a floor joist in the ceiling of the ground floor of the lean-to. Note that the joist (and all other joists in the ceiling) only rests on the ledger board, and is not joined in any way to the girt. Note also the decorative bead cut into the bottom edge of the planed joist, and the whitewash on the joist and on the underside of the floorboards. This apparently was the original finish of the ceiling in the lean-to. This joist and this portion of the ceiling were enclosed in a staircase, which preserved the whitewash. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

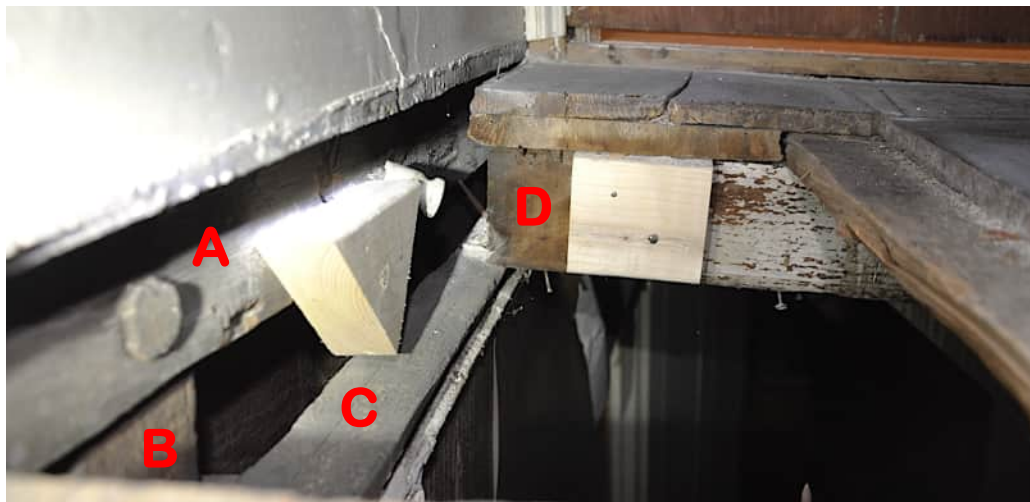


Figure 33. View of a joist in the ceiling of the Phase 2 lean-to over Rm 103 showing a whitewashed Phase 2 joist just barely resting on the ledger board which supports the south end of the joists. **A** is the lower half of the rear girt between the ground floor and the second floor of the Phase 1 house; **B** is the top end of a stud in the rear wall frame of the house, secured with a peg; **C** is a ledger board which measured approximately 3 inches by 3 inches in cross section, nailed to the wall studs of the house just below the level of the girt; **D** is a floor joist in the ceiling of the ground floor of the lean-to. As the north sill of the Phase 2 lean-to deteriorated through the 19th century, the structure settled and the joists were gradually pulled northward, almost off of the ledger board which supported them. This situation was stabilized in 2015 with the replacement of the north sill and installation of steel cables at the attic level to prevent further movement northward of the rear wall of the house. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

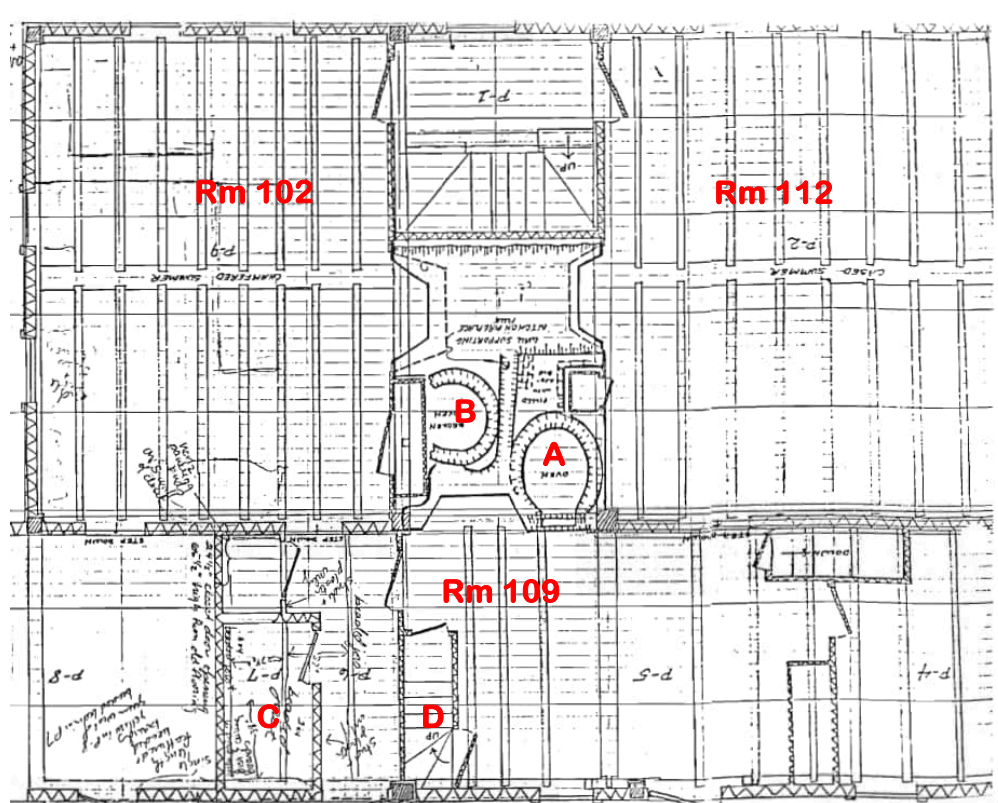


Figure 34. Plan of the ground floor of the Parsons House in 1981 prior to major repairs and alterations which included excavation of a new cellar beneath Rm 102 and replacement of the floor framing in Rm 102. The room partitions in the rear pile show the partitions extant in 1981. The framing shown in the drawing is of the joists and beams in the ceiling of the ground floor. **A** and **B** indicate the two bake ovens constructed in the new Phase 2 chimney, one facing into Rm 109 (**A**) in the rear lean-to, the other facing into the hall/kitchen (**B**). Use of oven **B** was discontinued during Phase 4 and a portion of the oven facing into Rm 102 was dismantled and a new wall cupboard was erected in front of the now-hidden and partially-dismantled bake oven. **C** indicates the location of the original rear staircase to the second floor. The staircase was moved to **D** in the early 20th century when a bathroom was installed in the space formerly occupied by the stairs (**C**). (Drawing by Nancy Rexford, 1981, Historic Northampton archives. Annotations by Myron O. Stachiw, 2026.)

The construction of this lean-to coincided with the complete dismantling of the Phase 1 chimney and the construction of the present brick chimney on the same Phase 1 chimney base. The original Phase 1 chimney had only two large, ground-floor fireplaces, with large fireboxes – one opening into the hall/kitchen (Rm 102) and the other into the parlor (Rm 112) (see Figure 4). The Phase 1 fireplace in the hall/kitchen very likely included a bake oven which opened into the firebox, either through the rear wall or a side wall of the firebox. The new Phase 2 chimney was built with three ground-floor fireplaces: one opening into the parlor, one into the hall/kitchen, and one into the lean-to, as well as a fourth on the second floor opening into the parlor chamber (Rm 210) (Figure 34). All four were built to the same dimensions, size of opening, and the same

shape of the firebox.⁸² The two fireplaces opening into the hall/kitchen and the rear lean-to were also built with bake ovens, but unlike the Phase 1 ovens, these were built in the new style where the oven was adjacent to the firebox and the mouth of the oven opened not into the firebox, but directly into the room. This new arrangement made its appearance in New England late in the 3rd quarter of the 18th century, and continued to be built in kitchens into the second quarter of the 19th century. The creation of two kitchens, as reflected in the two bake ovens built into the new chimney, reflected the presence of two households – representing two generations in this case – under one roof. While a similar situation of multiple households under the same roof existed during the Parsons family occupation, this solution was not chosen, whether for economic reasons or different intergenerational family dynamics.

Another indicator that the new chimney was built during Phase 2, and not during Phase 3 when the rear lean-to was raised to two stories and a new roof was built over the enlarged building, is the location of the chimney stack where it exits the roof. During Phase 1, the chimney rose through the very center of the roof, through the ridge. This, and proper flashing, was the most efficient way to prevent water from leaking around the chimney stack. When the chimney was rebuilt during Phase 2, it exited the roof in the same location as the Phase 1 chimney stack, as the Phase 1 roof structure was still on the building. When the rear lean-to was raised to two stories in 1816 (Phase 3), the old roof, with its long saltbox north slope, was replaced with a new symmetrical gable roof. The peak of this new roof was approximately three feet to the north of the Phase 1 roof peak and also more than a foot north of the Phase 2 chimney mass where it exited the roof (Figure 35).

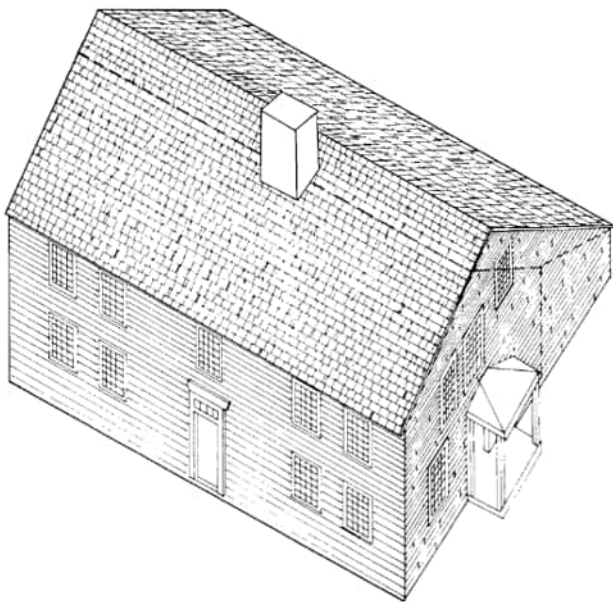


Figure 35.
Conjectural reconstruction of the appearance of the Parsons House after the rear lean-to was raised to two stories in 1816 during the Phase 3 improvements. The dashed lines on the roof and east gable end represent the roofline prior to the raising of the rear lean-to to two full stories and the installation of the new roof. (The drawing is from Clancey and Leeke, 1992.)

⁸² While all of the fireboxes were built to be the same size, the parlor (Rm 112) and the hall/kitchen firebox (Rm 102) were later reduced in size, likely during the second Federal Period remodeling in Phase 4.

The finish of the Phase 2 chimney breast wall in the rear lean-to (Rm 109) has not survived. The present vertical-board wall treatment on the chimney breast wall dates to repairs and remodeling undertaken in 1953 and later.

The Phase 2 fenestration in the west and north walls of the Phase 2 lean-to are not known at present, as no excavations through the current interior wall sheathing were undertaken during the 1992 or the 2024-25 investigation. The current doorway in the west wall may have been the location of a Phase 2 window. The Phase 2 east wall of the rear lean-to no longer exists, as it was removed during Phase 4 when the two-story east wing was constructed during Phase 4. However, it appears likely that the current doorway in the north wall of Rm 109 is an original opening. The same cannot be said about the present windows, as there is at least one closed-in former window opening on the north wall.

Rm 101 - Front Entry and Staircase – Phase 2

Rm 201 – Second-Floor Landing – Phase 2

The remodeling of the front entry, staircase, and second floor landing to its present configuration is clearly related to the first Federal Period campaign of remodeling undertaken during Phase 2. This is clearly illustrated by the fact that the east wall of the entry, containing the doorway between the entry and the hall/kitchen, consists of the back side of the rail- and style- elements of the paneling assembly installed on the west wall of the hall/kitchen once the new chimney was erected. The vertical board on the south side of the doorway to the hall/kitchen is the south end stile of the Rm 102 paneling assembly. Removal of lath and plaster from the entry lobby side of this stile undertaken during the 1992 SPNEA study revealed that the sawn- and split lath, fastened with machine-cut nails to the unpainted surface of the stile, was the first and only finished applied to this stile. On the hall/kitchen side of this stile, the paint stratigraphy on this stile matches the stratigraphy found on all other elements of the Phase 2 trim in the hall/kitchen.

Some of the trim in the entry lobby has been replaced in the 20th century - for example, the architrave and door on the south wall – and most other elements, including the staircase, were heavily stripped during the early 1980s. Nevertheless, some elements have retained evidence of their early paints. The door to the west parlor (Rm 112) had as its first painted treatment what appears to represent two generations of faux-wood graining – several layers of brown paint, each covered with a pigmented varnish. This same faux wood graining finish likely was also applied to door to Rm 102, but heavy paint-stripping on that door and trim and on other woodwork in Rm 101 has removed that evidence. The casing of the post in the southeast corner of the entry lobby beneath the applied baseboard revealed a first layer of dark red. This may have represented a first-generation painted mopboard on the post casing. The baseboard applied to this post is painted a dark red/brown on its lower, wide flat face as its first layer, while the molded top section of the baseboard has as its first layer a lighter gray brown paint. This same paint combination was found on the applied baseboards in the hall/kitchen, which were applied to the board wainscot over a painted dark red mopboard. However, the incompleteness and inconsistency of the paint stratigraphy profiles taken from the various woodwork elements in the entry lobby make it difficult to reconstruct a coherent picture of the earliest painted finishes in this room. A number of elements contain early layers of various shades of tan paint; these were

colors found as early paint layers on the Federal Period woodwork in both the parlor and the hall/kitchen.

The plaster on the walls, applied over sawn- and split lath and fastened with early machine-cut nails, remains on the walls. The first generation of paint on the plaster is a bright yellow orange ochre color, followed by a lighter yellow ochre. This suggests that the plaster may have been painted to complement the painted woodwork. There is evidence of multiple layers of wallpaper over the painted plaster and of a plaster skim coat treatment, with more wallpaper over that. In the hall/kitchen the plaster applied over the Phase 1 horizontal sheathing was painted a blue color, followed by a wallpaper with a blue ground, though no blue paint was found on the woodwork there.

The stairs rise to the second floor from west to east to the second floor, with two 90 degree turns at the west and east walls of the entry lobby (Figure 36). The newel posts are square in form, and the balustrade on the staircase is quite simple. A round hand rail is supported by delicate rectangular balusters. Most of the staircase structure is original to Phase 2, though some new material was inserted below the staircase, visible from the stairs down to the cellar.



Figure 36. Views of the Phase 2 staircase rising from the ground-floor entry lobby (left) to the second-floor landing (center). A closet opening from the entry lobby was created in the 20th century in the former staircase to the cellar). (Courtesy of Historic Northampton, Archives.)

In the original configuration of the entry lobby, the stairs to the Phase 1 cellar under the west parlor were entered through a doorway in the west wall of the hall/kitchen, and descended from east to west to the west cellar beneath the existing stairs to the second floor. These cellar stairs were removed during Phase 4, and the doorway to the cellar stairs in the west wall of the hall/kitchen was closed-off and the wall was lathed and plastered. It is likely that at this time a new doorway was cut through the north wall of the entry lobby, a floor was installed over the former staircase to the cellar, and a closet was created beneath the stairs to the second floor.

It is very likely that the second-floor landing remained essentially unfinished until Phase 2 when the new staircase was constructed and the walls and ceilings on the ground-floor lobby entry and second-floor landing were lathed and plastered, and the new large, double-hung sash window and baseboards and door trim to the two second-floor chambers were installed. The door to Rm 210 (west parlor chamber) also shows evidence of faux wood graining as the first generation of paint, suggesting that all of the woodwork on the second-floor landing was also painted in this manner.

Rm 102 - Hall/Kitchen – Phase 2

The Phase 1 hall/kitchen retained its original function as a kitchen into Phase 3. The Phase 1 finishes – molded- and lapped- horizontal board sheathing on the walls; large cooking fireplace with a bake oven opening into the firebox; casement windows; exposed- and heavily smoke- and soot-stained ceiling framing - remained essentially unchanged, from 1719 into the opening decade of the 19th century. The first change made sometime after 1798 – and likely after the acquisition of the property by Chloe Wright and her step-son Ferdinand Hunt Wright in 1807/08 - was the replacement of the casement windows with sash windows. Over the next decade the Wright family undertook major improvements to the old house which involved replacement of the Phase 1 chimney with a new chimney, erection of a new, larger rear lean-to, installation of larger sash windows, and extensive interior and exterior remodeling.

While the hall/kitchen retained its traditional function through phase 2 and into Phase 3, it received a complete interior remodeling during Phase 2 (and a second remodeling and repurposing during Phase 4. The existing Phase 1 finishes on the west wall were all removed during the construction of the new chimney, fireboxes and ovens, and a new, stylish, paneled wall was erected. This paneled wall was constructed in the same manner as the new paneled chimney breast wall in the parlor: in both rooms two rows of flat, vertically-oriented panels were arranged around the new firebox, and in the hall/kitchen, around the opening to the bake oven just to the north of the firebox (Figures 37, 38).⁸³ Because the Phase 2 paneling in the hall/kitchen around the firebox was removed during Phase 4, the nature and configuration of the fireplace surround is not known. In the west parlor (Rm 112) the Phase 2 fireplace surround consisted of bold bolection molding (see Figures 52, 53); a similar fireplace surround may have existed in the hall/kitchen.

⁸³ There are no historic images or descriptions of the Phase 2 paneled chimney breast wall paneling in the hall/kitchen (Rm 102). The paneling was partially dismantled when the firebox was reduced in size during Phase 4 and the present wall was built out over the remains of the Phase 2 paneling. Remnants of the Phase 2 paneling were discovered *in situ* during the 2024-2025 investigation when some lath and plaster were removed from the wall above the current mantelpiece (Figures 38 - top and 38 - bottom).



Figure 37. View of Phase 2 chimney breast wall paneling in the parlor (Rm 112). The flat panels and manner of construction of the paneled walls in both the hall/kitchen (Rm 102) and the parlor were identical. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2025.)

The paneled chimney breast walls in both the hall/kitchen and parlor were built in the new Federal style with flat panels rather than raised- and fielded panels common in the 18th century Georgian style. Another difference was the use of applied moldings to secure the panels within the rabbets cut into the edges of the stiles and rails surrounding each panel, rather than the earlier tradition of these moldings being integral to the stiles and rails. Note the clear evidence of the molding separating from the rail in Figure 38 - top.



Figure 38.

Top –In the hall/kitchen the top rail **A** of the paneling was fastened to the east face of the uncased chimney girt **B**; in the parlor, the paneling was attached to planks or studs below the cased chimney girt. Note the tenon in the end of the rail. This tenon was mortised to a stile which formed the north edge of the paneled wall.



Bottom – Excavation through the built-out Phase 4 chimney breast wall to reveal the yellow-tan top rail **A** of the Phase 2 paneled chimney breast wall in the hall/kitchen (Rm 102). A fragment of the Phase 2 ceiling plaster **B** survived, captured by the Phase 3 build-out of the chimney breast wall when the kitchen function of the room ended, the present mantelpiece was added, and the room was improved for use as a formal dining room. Note that the ceiling plaster butted directly against the paneling rail. (Photographs by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

A cupboard was built along the north end of the west wall, just beyond the north end of the paneled chimney breast wall and mouth of the bake oven. No physical parts of the cupboard survive, but very clear evidence of its configuration remains on the walls and ceiling of the hall/kitchen (Figures 39, 40, 41).



Figure 39. View of the hall/kitchen ceiling in the northwest corner of the room against the west (bottom) and north (right) walls of the room. Plaster has been removed to reveal a patch **B** in the original ceiling lath **A**. Note the original Phase 2 ceiling lath **A** was applied to joists in the ceiling in an east-west orientation, as the joists are oriented north-south. Lath **B** was applied in a north-south orientation to nailers introduced between the existing joists. The lath **A** was applied against the east and south sides of the cupboard (blue dashed lines indicates the outline of the cupboard). **C** is the cased girt on the north wall of the room. The cupboard was removed during the second Federal Period remodeling during Phase 4, which involved a major reconfiguration of the chimney breast wall of this room. This included a partial dismantling and blocking of the bake oven; reduction of the size of the firebox; partial dismantling of the Phase 2 paneled chimney breast wall; erection of a new wall several inches in front of the former paneled wall; construction of a new wall cupboard in front of the former bake oven; and installation of a new mantelpiece. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)



Figure 40. The dashed blue lines and the vertical blue line on the north wall of the hall/kitchen define the space occupied by the former Phase 2 cupboard. See Figure 41 for a detail view of the north wall at **A**. During Phases 1 and 2 the doorway from the hall/kitchen to the Phase 1- and Phase 2 rear lean-tos was smaller, as indicated by the yellow dashed lines. Enlargement of the doorway to its present size occurred during Phase 4. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)



Figure 41. Detail view of the evidence of the former Phase 2 cupboard in Figure Y. The blue vertical line indicates the location of the east (front) face of the cupboard. **A** indicates an area where the Phase 4 plaster was applied to the north wall *after* the cupboard was removed. This plaster was applied over sawn- and split lath applied vertically, whereas the Phase 2 plaster (to the right of the blue line) was applied over horizontally-nailed lath. Note the blue paint and wallpaper to the right on the original Phase 2 wall finish, and the absence of blue paint on the plaster to the left of the blue vertical line. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)



Figure 42. View of the Phase 2 wainscot on the north wall of the hall/kitchen (Rm 102). When first applied the wainscot was decorated with a red-painted mopboard (See Figure 45.) During Phase 3 or 4 a molded baseboard was applied over the painted mopboard. The doorway at left opens onto Rm 109 of the Phase 2 rear lean-to in the same location as the doorway into the Phase 1 lean-to. The Phase 1 horizontal boards on the interior walls of the hall/kitchen are visible after removal of the Phase 4 door architrave on the left doorway to Rm 109. The existing architrave on this doorway was installed during Phase 4 to match the architrave on the new doorway on the right created during Phase 4 after the east addition was constructed. Note that the architrave on the right-hand doorway was applied over the painted Phase 2 wainscoting. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

Painted woodwork in the hall/kitchen underwent two major phases of paint stripping in the 1950s and 1980s. However, careful examination of the paint layers on the Phase 2 woodwork revealed during building archaeology revealed several painting campaigns undertaken during Phase 2. Figures 43, 44, and 45 show the paint layers applied to the board wainscot on the north wall during the three painting campaigns undertaken during Phase 2. Figure 43 shows the portion of the wainscot covered by the architrave of a doorway created during Phase 3 or early Phase 4. Figure 44 shows the paint layers on the portion of the north wall wainscot not covered by the door architrave. Both show the same first three layers: 1- yellow ochre applied to the bare wood; 2 – lavender brown (Figure 43 shows 2 layers of the lavender brown paint, Figure 44 only one – perhaps the painter missed this spot when applying the second coat– but the two layers represent a single painting campaign, as no dirt line is seen between the layers); 3 –yellow tan, a single painting campaign in two layers of the same paint. Figure 44 shows four layers of the yellow tan (3-6), none of which show a clear dirt line between the layers. The layers above these six were stripped from the wainscot during the mid- 20th century.

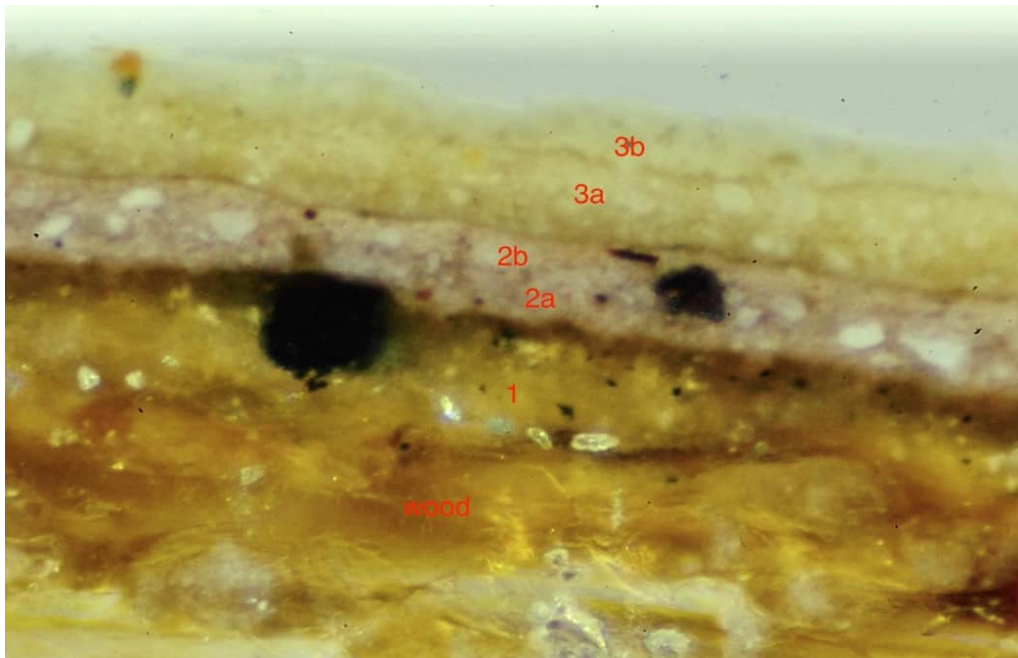


Figure 43. Photomicrograph of paint sample NPH 005 taken from the wainscot on the north wall which was covered by a door architrave during Phase 3 or early Phase 4. (Photograph by Christine Thomson.)



Figure 44. Photomicrograph of paint sample NPH 006 taken from the wainscot on the north wall which was not covered by the door architrave during Phase 3 or early Phase 4. This sample shows 4 layers of the tan yellow, but without any significant dirt line between layers, suggesting that the interval of time between applications was not particularly long. Numerous paint layers were applied after layer 6, but these were stripped in the 3rd quarter of the 20th century. (Photograph by Christine Thomson.)

Paint evidence discovered on the north and east wall wainscoting, in samples taken from behind the present applied baseboards, revealed the presence of a red painted mopboard applied over the lavender brown paint layer and part of that painting campaign (Figure 45). This later was covered by the yellow tan paint (layers 4 and 5). Paint layers above 4 and 5 were stripped in the mid-20th century.

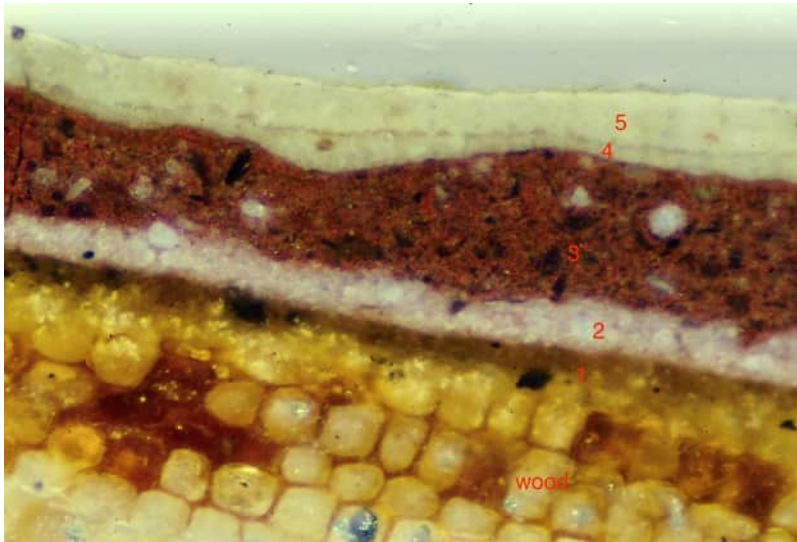


Figure 45. Photomicrograph of a paint sample NPH 021 taken from wainscoting on the north wall showing a thick red paint layer over the brown lavender generation 2 paint. This represented a painted mopboard which complemented the lavender brown paint layer. Layers above 4 and 5 were removed during 20th century paint stripping. (Photograph by Christine Thomson.)

Figure 46 represents a sample from the paneled chimney breast wall. It shows three paint campaigns: 1 – a thick layer of dark brown over yellow ochre, possible heavy soot or grease from the kitchen fireplace; 2 – the lavender brown paint layer; tan yellow paint layer, in two coats. No subsequent paint campaigns are evident in this sample, indicating that the paneled chimney breast wall was covered by the built-out wall installed during Phase 3 or early in Phase 4 together to which the present Phase 4 mantelpiece is attached.

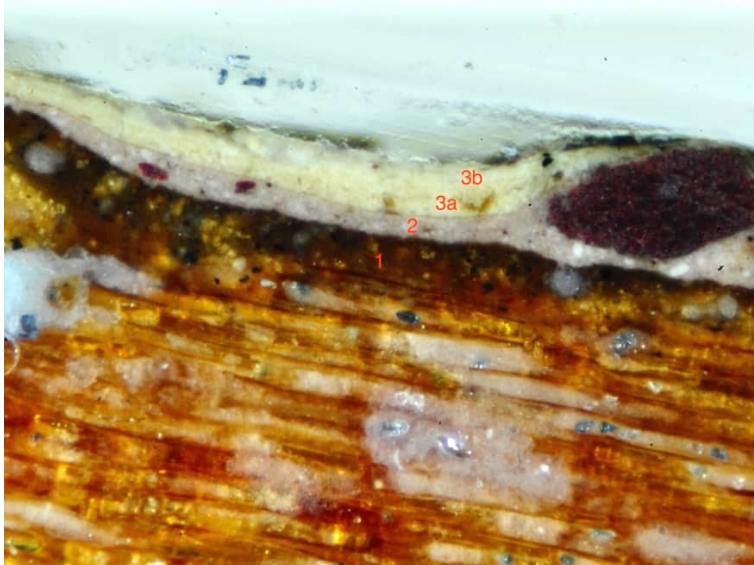


Figure 46.
Photomicrograph of a paint sample NPH 001 taken from the top rail of the paneled chimney breast on the west wall of the hall/kitchen. The paneling underwent only three painting campaigns before it was covered by the new Phase 4 west wall. (Photograph by Christine Thomson.)

The beam casings at the top of the walls of the hall/kitchen were also painted with the same paint as the other woodwork during Phase 2 (Figure 47). Their paint history begins with a thick layer of dark brown over yellow ochre, followed by the brown lavender and multiple layers of the yellow tan, covered by several off-white layers

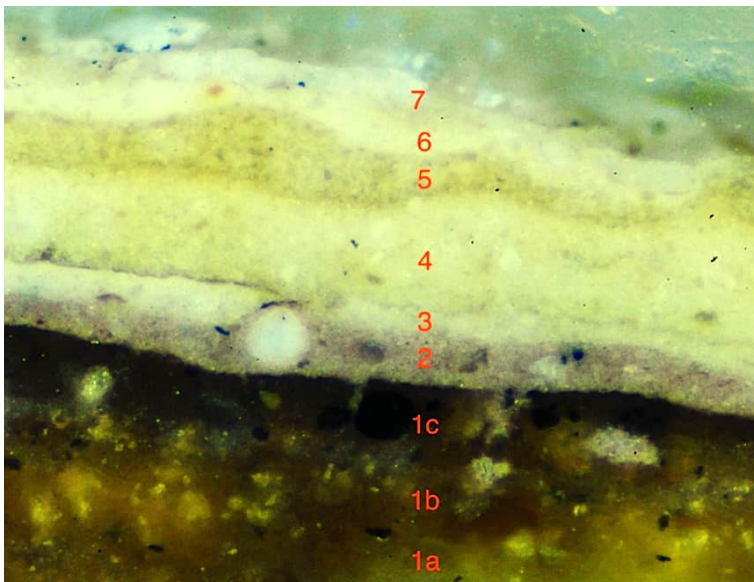


Figure 47. Photomicrograph of sample NPH 031 from the underside of the beam casing on the east wall of the hall/kitchen. Layers 1b and 1a (yellow brown) are covered with a heavy dark brown layer, likely soot and smoke staining from the kitchen fireplace. (Photograph by Christine Thomson.)

During Phase 2 the plaster on all of the walls was painted blue with a distemper paint. It is unclear whether this was matched with the first-generation yellow ochre on the woodwork, or the brown lavender paint of the second paint campaign. A blue wallpaper (Figure 48) was next applied to the plaster; it is unclear if it was applied to complement the brown lavender paint or the next layer of yellow tan paint.

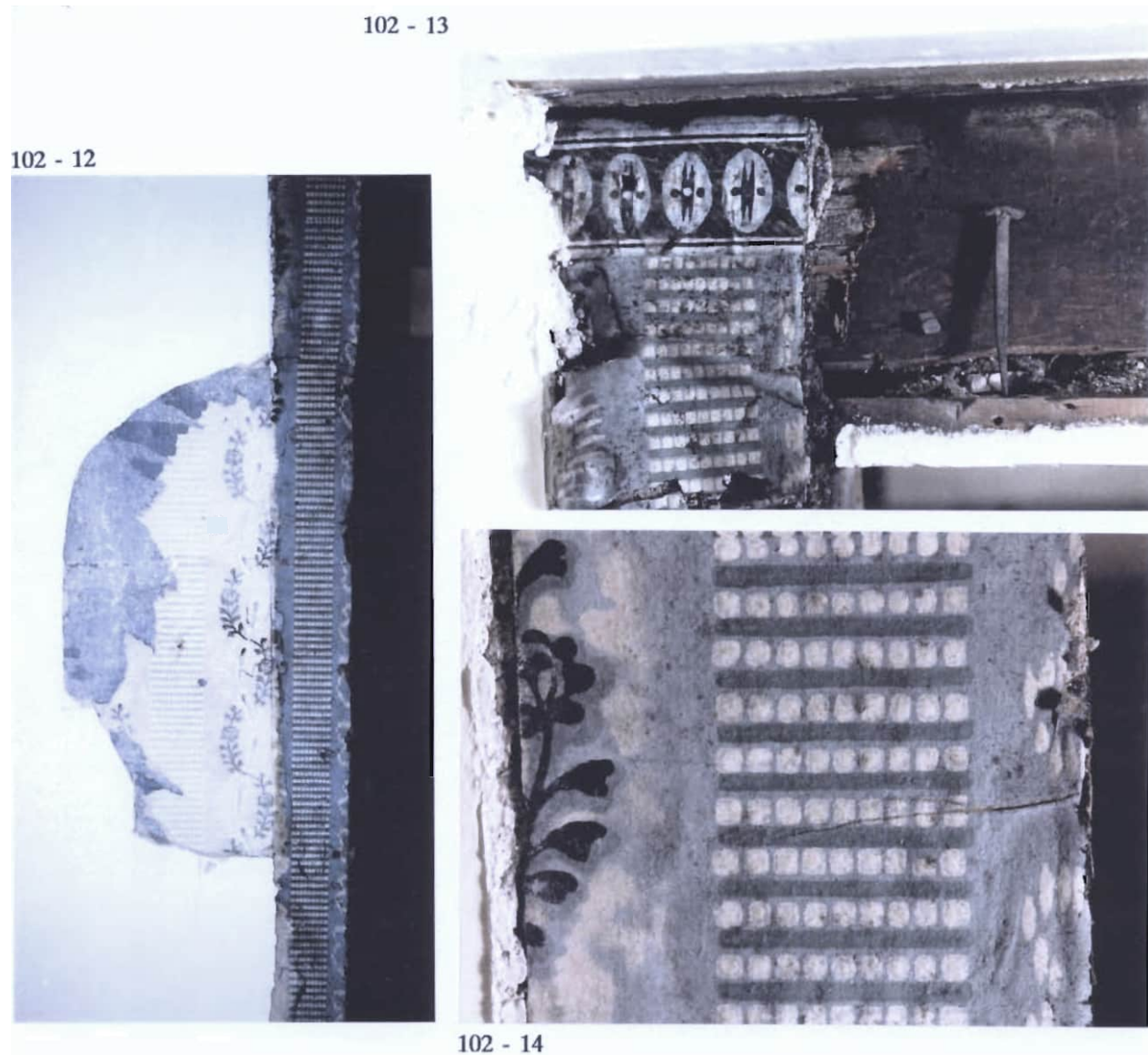


Figure 48. Detail views of the Phase 2 wallpaper applied over the blue-painted plaster on the walls of the hall/kitchen (Rm 102). These fragments survived under a Phase 4 door architrave and later layers of wallpaper and plaster. (Photograph from Clancey and Leeke, 1992.)



102 - 15



102 - 16



A(BM195)



102 - 17

Figure 49. The second-generation wallpaper on the walls of the hall/kitchen was preserved only under the west architrave of the doorway to Rm 104. It is likely that this wallpaper was applied as a complement to the yellow tan paint visible on the wainscot in the above image 102-17, as both the wallpaper and the tan-colored wainscot were covered by the door architrave. This wallpaper was applied late in Phase 2 or during Phase 3, as some of the woodwork in this room has shown as much as four layers of the yellow tan paint. The color swatch provides a close approximation of the original color of the yellow tan paint on the wainscot and other woodwork in this room. This doorway to Room 104 was created during the Phase 4 improvements (Photograph from Clancey and Leeke, 1992.)

Rm 112 –Parlor – Phase 2

Like the hall/kitchen (Rm 102) and the front entry lobby (Rm 101), the west parlor underwent a significant remodeling during Phase 2. Unlike the other two ground floor spaces, the walls and ceiling of the parlor had been lathed and plastered since c.1730, but other than several new coats of whitewash on the walls and ceiling, few improvements were made during the remainder of the 18th century. Phase 2 remodeling included the following changes:

- Removal of casement window(s) on the south elevation and installation of two sash windows (see Figures 23, 24, 25). This occurred sometime after 1798, but probably several years before the major Phase 2 improvements.
- Removal of the bank of casement window in the west wall of the parlor and replacement with the present double-hung sash window. Similar windows were also installed on the south wall.
- Removal of the Phase 1 chimney breast wall and rebuilding of the central chimney with a new, smaller firebox in the parlor. Building archaeology conducted during the 1992 study discovered finished boards used to close-in the large casement window opening around the new sash window, which were suspected of having been part of the Phase 1 chimney breast wall. A new paneled chimney breast wall, like that in the hall/kitchen, was installed on the east chimney breast wall (see Figure 51), and a corner cupboard was installed in the southwest corner of the room (see Figure 55) .
- Installation of wainscot, and new door- and window trim on the south, west, and north walls. On the north wall a new doorway to the rear lean-to was created. Most of the Phase 1 lath and plaster, baseboards, and chair rails survive on the west and north walls, covered by the new Phase 2 wainscot. On the south wall, the two episodes of installing sash windows resulted in the removal of most of the Phase 1 lath and plaster and trim from the south wall, as well as removal of the Phase 1 exterior siding and replacement with rough sawn boards, and relocation of existing studs or introduction of new studs to the walls to accommodate the new windows. This resulted in the installation of new sawn-and split lath and plaster above the wainscot on the south wall. It was discovered during the 1992 and 2024-25 study that some of the lath applied to the interior walls during the Phase 2 remodeling in this room and in the hall/kitchen was reused material, former exterior weatherboards and door- and window trim (Figure 50).



Figure 50.
View of the exterior south wall of the west parlor between the two existing windows. Removal of an exterior siding board revealed former exterior door- or window trim (A) reused as split lath. Note that the board was planed smooth and a bead had been applied on one edge. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2025)



Figure 51. View of the new Phase 2 paneled chimney breast wall applied to the east wall of the parlor. The present mantelpiece was applied during Phase 4. During Phase 2 the firebox was surrounded by bolelection molding. (See Figures 52 and 53 below.) The cavetto with astragal molding (A) at the top of the paneled wall just below the cased girt was also applied at this time. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw 2024.)

Removal of the Phase 4 mantelpiece during the 1992 study revealed a scar from the earlier Phase 2 trim around the firebox (Figure 52).

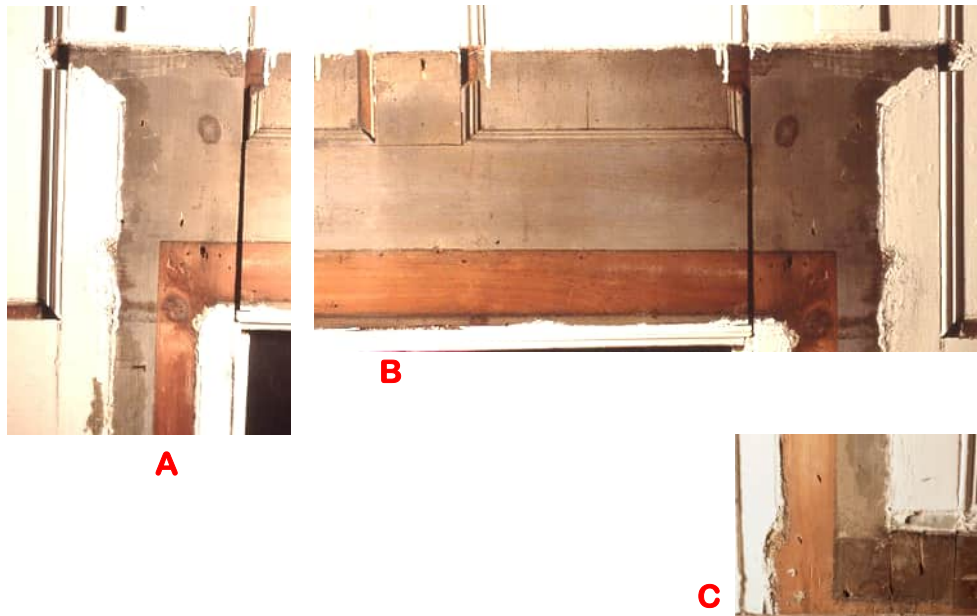
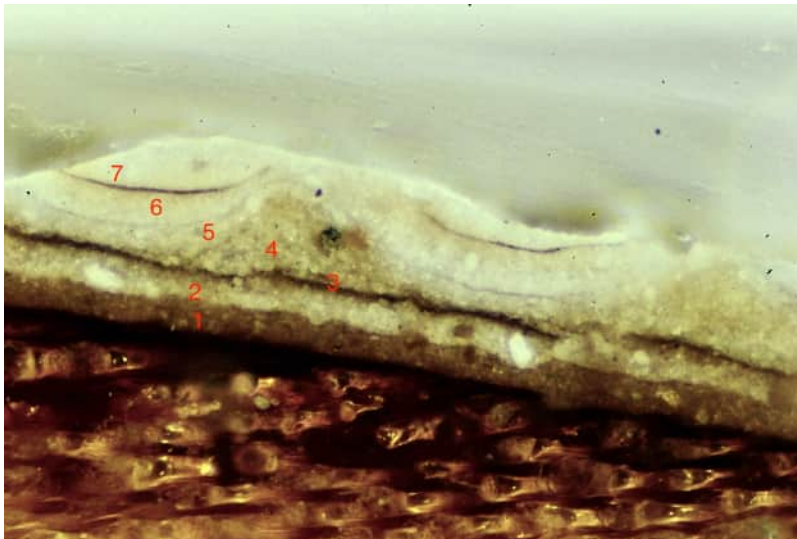


Figure 52. Composite image of the parlor chimney breast wall with the Phase 4 mantelpiece removed to reveal the scar of the Phase 2 bolelection molding surround of the firebox (Figure 53). **A** and **B** confirm that the Phase 2 fireplace surround (the bolelection molding) lacked a shelf like the Phase 4 mantelpiece. The paint revealed beneath the Phase 4 mantelpiece is the second Phase 2 painting campaign on the paneled wall – a tan yellow paint. **C** is an image at the base of the paneling on the right (south) side of the firebox. It shows a dark brown painted mopboard which was later covered by a molded baseboard in Phase 3 or 4. (Photographs by John Leeke, 1992.)



Figure 53.
Example of a bolection molding fireplace surround. Babson-Alling House, Gloucester, MA. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2025.)

The Phase 2 paint history of this room to some extent parallels that found in the hall/kitchen. The main difference lies in the first layers. In the hall/kitchen a yellow ochre paint was applied to the bare wood of the wainscot, door- and window trim, and paneled chimney breast wall; in the parlor it was a subtle gray green tan. The second paint layer in the hall/kitchen was a soft brown lavender, in tone somewhat more in the character of the first layer in the parlor. In both the hall/kitchen and the parlor the next three or four layers were a variation of tan-yellow- ochre. The second painting campaign in the parlor before the application of the new Phase 4 Federal Style mantelpiece was a tan paint (Figures 52, 54). These early colors were also found on the post-and beam casings, similar to what was found in the hall/kitchen. By Phase 4 it appears that most of the ground floor rooms were painted some variation of the tan- yellow-ochre range, with wallpapers on the walls which complemented those colors.



7	OW
6	tan on OW primer, varnish on top
5	tan gray
4	tan
3	tan orange
2	tan yellow with varnish
1	gray green tan*
	wood

Figure 54. Photomicrograph of paint sample taken from a panel on the east paneled wall showing the first seven layers of paint applied to the Phase 2 paneling. (Photograph by Christine Thomson.)

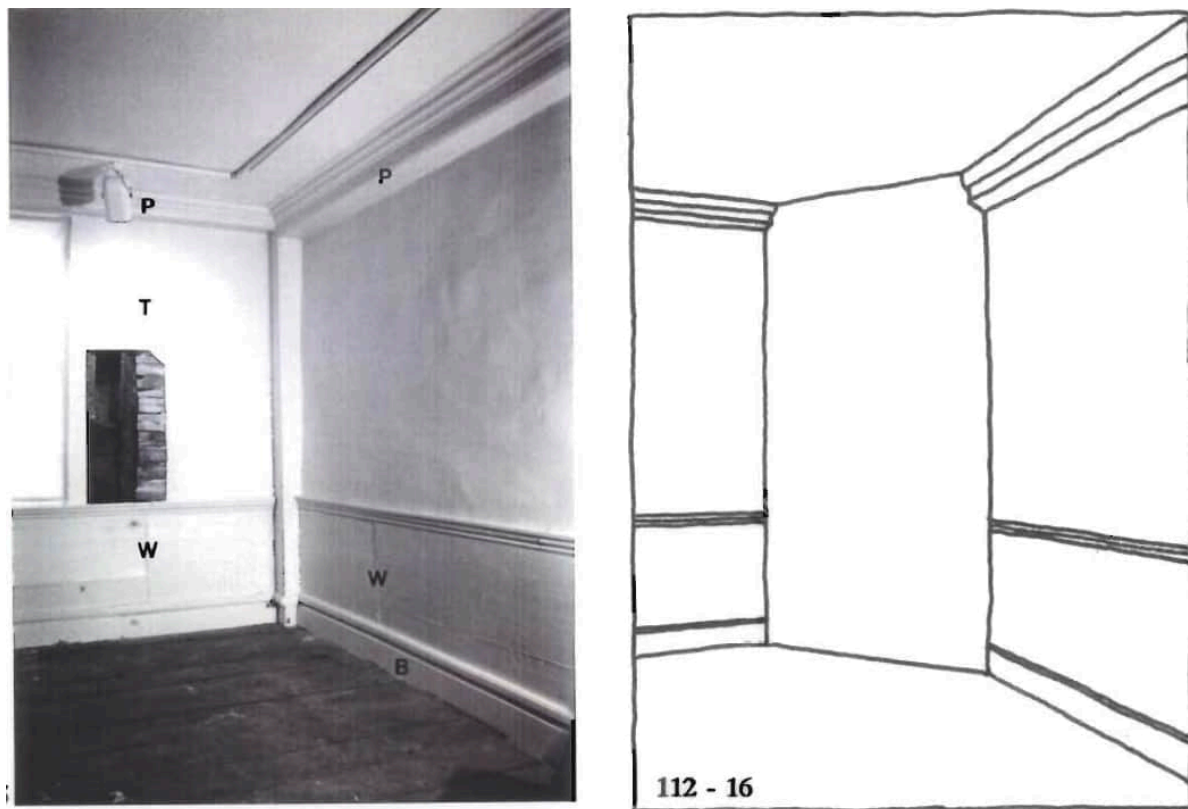


Figure 55. Left - View of the southwest corner of the parlor showing the former location of the corner cupboard. Right -Conjectural drawing of location and orientation of the corner cupboard. (Clancey and Leeke, 1992.)

Building archaeology undertaken in 1992 revealed the former presence of a corner cupboard in the southwest corner of the room, but it is unclear whether this cupboard was added sometime in the 18th century or was part of the Phase 2 improvements. It is clear that the wainscot on the south and west walls was applied against the cupboard, and the paint evidence confirms the presence of the earliest paint layers tied to Phase 2 on the wainscot to either side of the space formerly occupied by the cupboard. The cupboard was likely removed during Phase 3 when a new cupboard was erected in the northeast corner of this room and wainscot to match the existing Phase 2 wainscot was applied in its place (Figure 55, left).

There is very clear evidence in the parlor Rm 112, as well as in the hall/kitchen (Rm 102), that by the opening years of the 19th century both the north- and south sills of the house had significantly deteriorated. By the time that the Phase 2 east chimney breast wall was constructed the north sill had lost several inches in height due to deterioration, and the wall showed considerable settling. In Figure 56 note that the top edge of the panels on the wall all align nicely at the same level, and to the level of the floor. However, if one compares the distance between the top of the panels and the bottom of the girt casing, it becomes obvious how much the north wall had settled by the beginning of the 19th century when the paneling was installed. The deterioration of the sills may have been accelerated by the presence of brick nogging in the

walls, a combination of the weight of the nogging on the sills and frequent condensation of water on the bricks above the sills, and on the stone foundation below the sills.



Figure 56. View of the east wall of the parlor, late 20th century. By the time the paneled chimney breast wall was constructed in the early 19th century the rear (north) sill had suffered significant deterioration as illustrated by the narrowing space between the top of the panels and the bottom of the girt. The paneled chimney breast wall was clearly built to the already settled north wall and cased chimney girt, but no effort was made at that time in the early 19th century to raise and level up the frame of the house. (Courtesy of Historic Northampton Archive.)

Similar settling had been observed along the south wall, also due to deteriorating sills, though the degree of settling was not as severe. In all three rooms (Rms 101, 102, 112) significant settling and deflection had occurred. In all three rooms attempts to level the floor were made, likely during phases 3 and 4 when major structural work was undertaken - but no attempt was made to raise and shore up the settling frame. This resulted in lower sections of post casings, wainscot, and baseboards to continue down below the level of the floors in some rooms as the floors were later leveled and raised.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ Measurements of the distance between the floor and the underside of the girts were taken in all of the first- and second floor rooms of the Phase 1 house. The measurements taken between floor and girt in the second-floor rooms was consistent; measurements on the ground floor revealed that as one moved eastward along the north and south walls the distance between floor and girt diminished, showing a clear leaning of the building's frame due to greater deterioration of the sills under those parts of the building where there was no cellar. At the east gable-end posts on the ground floor the distance between floor and girt was nearly six inches less than at the northwest corner post in the parlor.

Rm 202 – Southeast Hall/Kitchen Chamber**Rm 203 – Northeast Hall/Kitchen Chamber****Rm 210 – West Parlor Chamber**

The finishing of the second-floor rooms involved the creation of a firebox in the east wall parlor chamber (Rm 210); application of lath and plaster to the walls and ceilings of these rooms; installation of the large double-hung sash windows on the south- and west walls of Rm 210, the south and east walls of Rm 202, and the east wall of 203; installation of baseboards, door- and window trim; and new butted, pine flooring over the Phase 1 ship-lapped flooring.

The process of finishing these rooms clearly began during Phase 2 as indicated by three major construction events: the replacement of the Phase 1 chimney with the present chimney; the replacement of the windows in the south wall of Rm 202; and construction of the full rear lean-to. The new chimney contained four new fireplaces: in the parlor (Rm 112), in the former hall/kitchen (Rm 102), in the new rear lean-to (Rm 109), and in the parlor chamber (Rm 210). New bake ovens located beside the firebox rather than within the firebox were included in Rms 102 and 109, indicating that these two spaces served as contemporary kitchens. It is not clear whether a fireplace existed in the parlor chamber during Phase 1, but the absence of a framed hearth in the floor of that room strongly suggests that there was no fireplace in that room during Phase 1. Only once the new floors, baseboards and window- and door trim were in place would the lath and plaster have been applied to the walls and ceilings. Since a fireplace was introduced into Rm 210 with the new chimney, and the construction of the new chimney likely occurred early in Phase 2, it is likely that the finishing of Rm 210 with the addition of the lath and plaster also occurred early during Phase 2. This room likely served as the chamber occupied by Daniel and Chloe Wright. The finishing of the east chamber (now Rms 202/203) likely also occurred during Phase 2, though the division of the large room into two smaller rooms by the erection of an east-west wall may have occurred during Phase 3.

Currently Rm 210 has a doorway in the north wall opening into Rm 209; Rm 203 now has three doorways: into Rm 204, into the present rear staircase (Rm 205), and into Rm 206 (former caretaker's apartment bathroom). During Phase 2 the space north of Rms 210 and 203 was an unfinished garret beneath the saltbox roof of the new rear lean-to. It is presently unknown whether access to this garret was provided only by stairs from the ground floor of the lean-to or from one or both of the second-floor rooms (Rms 210 or 202/203). The current doorways and trim to Rms 209 and 204 likely date to Phases 3 and 4 when the rear lean-to was raised to two full stories and the east wing was added, expanding Rm 204 to its present configuration. If the doorway to the present rear staircase existed during Phases 2 and 3 (and later), it likely was closed-in when the staircase was removed and relocated about six feet to the east into Rm 208 in the early 20th century to accommodate a bathroom on the ground floor. The staircase – and presumably the doorway – were not recreated until 1981 when the staircase was rebuilt in its original location to serve the caretaker's apartment.

It is possible that the application of the lath and plaster and painting of woodwork – the final finishing of the rooms before occupation, especially in Rms 202 and 203 – may have been completed only during Phases 3 and/or 4. There are several factors which may have played a role in the timing of these improvements. The major disruption of the removal of the Phase 1 chimney, construction of the Phase 2 chimney, construction of the rear lean-to, and replacement

of windows may have been more than enough construction activity during the first several years of occupancy of the house by the members of the Wright family. The 1810 census listed only six members of the household: Daniel Wright; wife Chloe; son Ferdinand Hunt; and three surviving daughters⁸⁵ of Daniel and Chloe. Ferdinand Hunt did not marry until 1811, and his daughters were born in 1822, 1823, 1824, and 1826. The two ground-floor rooms, two second-floor rooms, and the three rooms in the new rear lean-to (and unfinished garret space) may have sufficed for the two Wright households until Ferdinand's and Olive's children were born between 1822 and 1826. It is during this period between the mid 1810s and the mid -1820s that Phases 3 and 4 were undertaken. Phase 3 – the raising of the rear lean-to to two full stories in 1816 – added three additional second-floor rooms; Phase 4 construction of the one-story west wing c. 1822 added one room, with a fireplace, and construction of the two-story east wing enlarged two existing rooms, adding fireplaces to each of those rooms. At some point during Phases 2, 3, or 4 the unheated east chamber over the former hall/kitchen was divided into two rooms – Rm 202 and 203. When this occurred a new window was introduced into the east wall of Rm 203. By the end of this process in the mid-1830s the house had seven ground-floor rooms (four with fireplaces) and six second-floor rooms (two with fireplaces).⁸⁶ In 1830 the house was occupied by widow Chloe Wright (aged 66), Ferdinand Hunt (aged 46), his wife Olive (aged 37), their three daughters (aged 14, 8, and 6), and an infant grandchild.⁸⁷

The manner of finishing of the ceilings in Rms 202 and 203 differs from the way the ceiling in Rm 210 was finished. In Rm 210 the lath was applied in such a manner that the beams at the top of the walls and the summer beam are entirely hidden by the lath and plaster. This was accomplished by attaching horizontal nailers, to which the sawn and split lath were attached, to the underside of the beams, with additional support from hanging struts which were nailed to the sides of the joists and to the horizontal nailers. In contrast, the lath in the ceilings in Rms 202 and 203 was nailed directly to the underside of the joists, thus allowing the cased summer beam and the cased beams at the top of the walls to project into the room and to be visible. This suggests that the finishing and partitioning of Rm 202 into two smaller rooms may have been carried out by different carpenters and at a different time from the finishing of Rm 210. The exact sequence and timing of these construction activities has not been determined, but the combination of household demographic changes and larger phased construction activities between the 1810s and 1830s suggests the likelihood that the finishing of the second-floor rooms occurred episodically as needed.

⁸⁵ Of the four daughters born to Daniel and Chloe Wright between 1794 and 1802, only three were alive when they gained full title to the house and property in 1808. A second daughter died soon after at the age of 7, and a third died in 1818 at the age of 22. Rexford, "History of Parsons House Residents", p. 4.

⁸⁶ This stands in stark contrast to the three ground-floor rooms and two second-floor rooms which existed throughout the 18th century (Phase 1). It should be noted that the family population and dynamic changed in 1824 when Daniel Wright died and his son Ferdinand Hunt Wright became the household head.

⁸⁷ 1830 U.S. Census, Northampton, MA, Household #7. Series: M19; Roll: 64; Page: 587; Family History Library Film: 0337922. Accessed online at https://www.ancestry.com/imageviewer/collections/8058/images/4411352_01177?queryId=7b72ad7d-bf94-44f8-8e29-9848f6574211&usePUB=true&_phsrc=hfW1&_phstart=successSource&pId=2014816

Painted Finishes – Phase 2

Rm 210 – Parlor chamber

The first paint campaign represented on the east wall door architrave and baseboard, and on the window architraves in the south and west walls of Rm 210 included a tan primer covered by a dark brown-green paint. In contrast, the first paint campaign on the door and door trim in the north wall to Rm 209 involved a cream-colored primer and a light blue green paint. This indicates that these events occurred at different times – the door- and window architraves on the south- and west walls, and baseboard on the east wall were likely the first painting campaign sometime during Phase 2, and the paint on the door and door trim on the north wall likely occurred during Phase 3 after the raising of the rear pile of the house (former rear lean-to) to two full stories in 1816. Subsequent painting campaigns show consistent paint stratigraphy on all of the woodwork in this room.

Rm 202 – South Hall/Kitchen Chamber

The woodwork in Rm 202 – window and door architraves and cased beams - shows only five layers of paint. The first campaign was a yellow/tan gray to gray tan, followed by only four painting campaigns with off-white, off-white tan, off-white cream, and off-white gray (Figure 57). The first paint campaign likely occurred during Phase 2 or early in Phase 3.

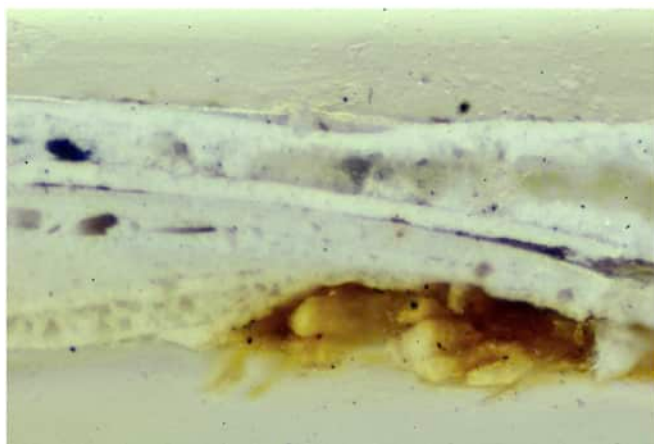


Figure 57.
Photomicrograph (sample 081) of paint from the baseboard on the south wall of Rm 202. Only five layers of paint were applied in this room. The first layer is a yellow gray tan paint. (Photograph by Christine Thomson.)

Rm 203 – North Hall/Kitchen Chamber

A closet was erected against the west wall of this room in the northwest corner of the room. The first layer of paint on this closet is a gray/tan-gray, similar to the first layer of paint found in Rm 202. The paint on the north wall post casing is described as tan gray; the beam casings in Rm 202 were described as gray tan and yellow tan gray. This suggests that the painting of both rooms was more or less contemporary, though the partitioning, plastering, and painting of woodwork may not have occurred until Phase 3 when the rear pile was raised to two full stories. The door and doorway to Rm 204, window in the east wall show a different first paint layer, suggesting they were not installed and painted until Phase 3 when the rear pile was raised to two full stories and Rm 204 was created on the north side of Rm 203.

Phase 3 – 1816 – Raising of the Rear Pile to Two Full Stories

Dendrochronology analyses of samples taken from framing members in the second story of the rear pile of the house and from the new roof structure erected over the enlarged building have consistently provided dates of 1814 and 1815 for the felling of the trees from which the framing elements were fashioned, yielding a construction date of 1816, or very soon after.

During the Phase 3 enlargement of the Phase 2 rear lean-to to two full stories the sills, posts, studs, braces, rear plate, and the joists and girts in the floor and ceiling of the ground floor rooms were retained, but the rafters forming the long saltbox roof over the rear lean-to were removed. Posts one-story in height were added above the former rear plate of the lean-to, mortises were cut in the former plate for second-story studs, and a new plate and tie beams created the new garret-level floor framing over the raised rear pile. A number of the elements used as joists in the garret-level framing over the rear pile were clearly reused rafters, likely rafters from the Phase 1 roof, as felling dates of 1715-1718 were obtained for several of those elements and a number of them contained mortises for purlins. Similarly, several of the framing elements of the new roof structure over the enlarged building also yielded 1715-1718 felling dates: several posts for the tilted purlins which supported the longer rafters of the new roof were clearly reused elements from the Phase 1 roof. Given their size, they were likely parts of former principal rafters. Most other elements in the new roof yielded dates of 1814-1815. The Phase 3 roof included a hewn five-sided ridge pole with the common rafters tenoned and pegged into the ridge pole (Figures 58, 59). The Phase 1 roof frame did not include a ridge pole.



Figure 58. Phase 3, east and west elevations showing the principal framing elements by phase which exist in 2026. Where studs are not drawn indicates that the framing was not accessible in those areas. Where sills are not drawn indicates that they have been replaced since the Phase 3 construction. (Drawing by Nevan Carling.)

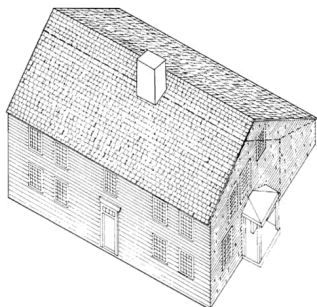


Figure 59. Conjectural reconstruction drawing of the Parsons House after the Phase 3 raising of the rear lean-to to two full stories. (Drawing from Clancey and Leeke, 1992.)

With the raising of the rear pile to two stories double-hung sash windows were installed in the west, north, and east elevations of the new second-story rooms to match those already in place in Rms 201, 202, and 210, and the exterior of the house was clad for the first time in wide weatherboards on all four elevations. These were applied over the surviving Phase 1 and Phase 2 exterior sheathing and over the new sheathing applied to the raised second story. The new weatherboarding was wider than standard clapboards, measuring approximately 6- to 7 inches in exposure. It is unknown how soon after their application that these weatherboards were painted.⁸⁸

Three new rooms were created on the second floor during Phase 3: the western two-thirds of Rm 204, Rm 206, and Rm 209 (Figure 60).⁸⁹

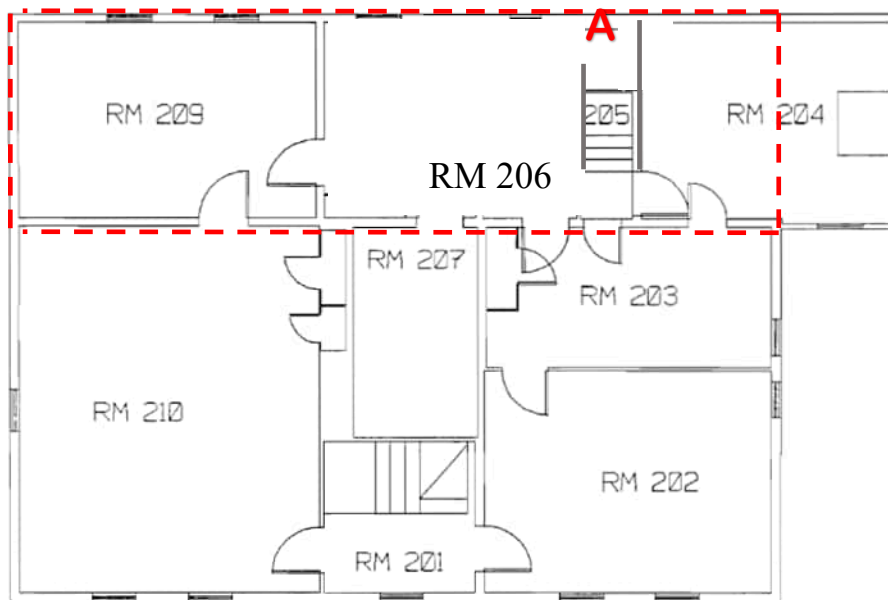


Figure 60. Second floor plan. The red lines define the three rooms created on the second floor of the Phase 3 raised rear pile. Rm 204 and the room beneath it (Rm 104) were extended eastward during the Phase 4 construction of the two-story east wing. During Phase 3 the rear central room (Rm 206) was a single room; it was divided into two rooms in the 20th century to create a bathroom on the second floor. **A** indicates the location of a Phase 3 window which provided light to the rear staircase (Rm 205). (Drawing from Clancey and Leeke, 1992.)

⁸⁸ Investigations of exterior weatherboards have yielded evidence only of white paint. Evidence for the application of the weatherboards to all four walls of the house during Phase 3 is found in the garret of the one-story Phase 5 rear kitchen ell and in the garret of the Phase 4 west wing. In both locations a pattern of nail holes exists in the exposed second-story north- and west wall sheathing where the weatherboards were removed when the Phase 4 west wing and the Phase 5 rear kitchen ell were constructed.

⁸⁹ The room designated 206 was a single room during Phase 3. It was subdivided into two rooms (Rms 206 and 208) in the late 19th- or early 20th century. What is now Rm 204 achieved its present form during Phase 4 when the two-story east wing was added. At this time the east walls of the existing northeast-corner rooms on both the ground floor and second floor were removed to enlarge the two rooms eastward about six feet. A chimney was added on the east wall with fireplaces in both the ground-floor room and the second-floor room during Phase 4.

The walls and ceilings of the three new rooms on the second floor were lathed with sawn- and split lath similar to the other second-floor rooms and plastered. Nails used to fasten the lath were a combination of Type 1 (c.1795-1810) and Type 2 (c.1810-1830s) machine-cut nails. Double-hung sash windows were placed in the west- and north walls of Rm 209, on the north wall of Rm 206, and on the east wall of Rm 204. It is not known at this time if a window was also placed in the north wall of Rm 204. Very simple trim was applied to the window- and door openings. Rms 204 and 206 were accessed from the ground floor by the rear staircase (Rm 205) which rose from Rm 109. It has not been determined if the doorways between Rms 206 and 209, between Rm 203 and Rm 206, and between Rm 209 and Rm 210 were Phase 3 features, as no building archaeology was undertaken around those doorways.

A small window was created high on the north wall of the Phase 3 rear staircase (Rm 205) to light the stairs (Figures 60, 61). The window was first discovered from the Phase 5 rear kitchen ell garret and further revealed through building archaeology on the north wall of the small closet at the north end of the west wall of Rm 204.



Figure 61. Left – View of the north wall of the Phase 3 raised second-story of the rear pile of the house from the garret of the Phase 5 one-story rear kitchen ell. They yellow dashed lines indicate the location and remains of the window opening and window trim. The opening below the former window is a modern access port to the rear ell garret.

Right – view of the window opening and interior trim in the north wall of a closet in Rm 204. Note the lath and plaster below the former window opening. Both the window trim and plaster are whitewashed. (Photographs by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

The nature of changes made in the ground floor rooms during Phase 3 appear to be minor. Physical evidence has revealed that the doorways through the north walls of Rms 102 and 112 into the central ground-floor room of the rear pile (Rm 109) already existed at the time of the Phase 3 raising of the rear pile, and these were retained until the Phase 4 construction and remodeling campaign was undertaken. If anything, additional painting campaigns were undertaken in both Rms 112 and 102; in Rm 112 a tan yellow paint was applied to the paneling around the Phase 2 bolection molding fireplace surround and to other woodwork in this room (Figure 52), and in Rm 102 the existing yellow tan paint was refreshed with a new application of the same paint.

During the 1992 SPNEA investigation wallpaper was discovered *in situ* on the west wall of Rm 112 beneath the south architrave stile of the doorway to the new Phase 4 west wing. This doorway was created during the construction of the west wing, so it is clear that the wallpaper was applied to the wall prior to the commencement of the Phase 4 construction of the west wing in 1822 (Figure 62).



Figure 62.

Detail views of the Phase 3 wallpaper applied over the whitewashed plaster walls of the west parlor.

Left – a view of the strip of wallpaper which was covered by the Phase 4 door architrave. The wallpaper outside of the door architrave on the south, west, and north walls was removed during later redecorating campaigns.

Right – Detail of block-printed pattern on wallpaper. The tan yellow ground paint was applied to the paper first, then the green, then the white paint, and finally the black/dark brown paint. (Clancey and Leeke, 1992.)

Imported English and French paper hangings were available in the American Colonies by the early 18th century, though their application in American homes throughout most of the 18th century was largely limited to homes of the well-to-do. Domestic American production was launched in 1790, and by 1800 the manufacture of paper hangings was established in Boston (J. F. Bumstead & Co.), Philadelphia (William Poyntell), and New York (John Rugar).⁹⁰ On June 4, 1789 the *Hampshire Gazette* published an article which noted the arrival in Baltimore of three French gentlemen who planned to establish a manufactory for printing of cotton and linen cloths and paper hangings. The article claimed that these men were “bred and employed in that business in the city of Nantes, in France; where the art of calico and paper hanging printing is improved beyond any part of Europe.” (Figure 63.)

⁹⁰ Grove Art Online "Wallpaper", Oxford Art Online.

N O R T H A M P T O N, June 3.
The Hon. THEODORE SEDGWICK, Esq. is chosen
Federal Representative for this District, by a majority
of seven votes.
Arrived at Baltimore, for the purpose of establish-
ing the printing of cotton and linnen cloaths and pa-
per hangings, Messrs *Colay, Charden and Orinard*. It
is uncertain in what place these gentlemen will fix them-
selves, but, wherever it shall be, their success is most
earnestly to be wished, and amounts to a certainty.
They have been regularly bred and employed in that
business in the city of Nantz, in France, where the art
of calico and paper hanging printing is improved be-
yond any part of Europe. The importation of printed
linens and cotton into the United States is estimated at
sixty-five thousand pounds annually, besides which there
are very large quantities of paper hangings made.

Figure 63. Article printed in the *Hampshire Gazette* on June 4, 1789.

Wallpaper, or paper hangings, as it was called in the late 18th- and early 19th centuries, was advertised in Northampton's *Hampshire Gazette* by 1790, but the advertisement was for goods available in the Hartford store of merchants William and George Bull, who had on hand for sale "A great variety of Paper Hangings". The earliest *Hampshire Gazette* advertisement for sales of paper hangings in the Northampton area was in 1792 by Williamsburg merchant and *Hampshire Gazette* publisher Daniel Butler that he had recently received for sale "A general assortment of English goods", including "paper hangings". The following year Northampton merchant R. Breck and son advertised "A general assortment of American and French Paper Hangings suitable for papering rooms." By 1810 several Northampton merchants placed advertisements in the *Hampshire Gazette* for "a large assortment of Paper Hangings and Borders, of various descriptions". An 1824 advertisement placed in the *Hampshire Gazette* by Northampton merchant H.T. Hooker announced that he "has just received and offers for sale 500 rolls of French and American Paper Hangings, Bordering and Fire Board Patterns." (Figure 64).

William & George Bull,
Have a small Consignment of
DRY GOODS,
Which they will dispose of on very reasonable terms,
by wholesale, for barrel Beef, Pork, Butter, Flax-Seed,
Flax, and Tow Cloth, viz.

Stormont Calicoes,	Low priced Linens;
Fancy do.	Jeans, of best kind.
Light and Dark Chintz,	A great variety of Paper
Dark Calicoes,	Hangings,
Modes,	A few dozen Shawles,
Black Silk Handkerchiefs,	Writing Paper,
Cotton Flagg do.	Wool Cards,
Shalloons,	Tobacco,
Durants,	Chocolate,
Tammies,	Rum,
Worsted Hofs,	Sugar,
Black and White Plain	Tea,
Gauze,	Iron Ware, &c. as usual.
Do. do. Millinet,	A few barrels of Liver Oil,
Strinettes,	Providence Lime,
Lastings,	American Duck,
Velvets,	For Ash Kettles.

Hartford, August 28, 1796.

R. BRECK, and SON,
INFORM their customers and the public, they have just received a large
and general assortment of
English, India and Hard-Ware
GOODS,
Suitable for all seasons, which their customers and others may obtain on the most reasonable terms possible. Likewise, W. India Rum, N. England, do. Molasses, Gin, Brandy, Leaf and Brown Sugars, Cotton Wool, all kinds of Spices, Coffee, Chocolate, Raisins, Saffron, Bobs and Souchong Teas, of the first quality, & cheap as usual; Russia and Swedish Iron, German Steel, Crowley Steel, 6 by 8, 7 by 9 Window Glass, 20d, 10d, 8d and 4d, wrought Nails, Corfams and Bolting Cloths, Iron Shovels, Prying Bars, Macbride, by the barrel or less. All kinds of Groceries, always for sale; Painted Capers, Table Cloth, Horseman's Hanger Blades, Rovers and Felt Hats.

A large and general assortment of Glass and Queens Ware, very low. A general assortment of American & French Paper Hangings, suitable for papering Rooms. Likewise an assortment of elegant Gilt Frame Looking Glasses, of all Sizes and Prices. Most kinds of produce taken in payment as usual. Constant attendance given, and every favour acknowledged with gratitude, by the public's Humble Servants,

R. BRECK, and SON,
N. B. They want to purchase a quantity of BEES-WAX, for which they will pay the highest price in cash.
Northampton, May 21, 1793.

Leather, & Paper Hangings.
At No. 6, Merchants Row.
Tappan & Whitney,
AGENTS for the Hampshire Leather Manufactory—
HAVE just received and will constantly keep for sale, at wholesale or retail, a good assortment of black and colored Goat and Roan Skin
Morroco Leather,
—ALSO—
They have received an additional supply of
TANNED and CURRIED
LEATHER.
All of which they will sell at retail for cash, or wholesale on short credit, as low as can be bought of equal quality in the country.
ALSO,
THEY OFFER A NEW ASSORTMENT OF
PAPER HANGINGS,
at the Manufactory prices.
Northampton, Sept. 5, 1810. 53 tf.

Samuel Clarke & Sons,
HAVE ON HAND A GREAT VARIETY OF
PIECE GOODS,
Hardware, Iron Hollow Ware, Crockery,
Glass, and Stone Ware, Groceries,
Iron and Steel, Paints and Oil, Crown
Glass, &c. &c.
THEY HAVE LIKEWISE A LARGE
ASSORTMENT
Paper Hangings,
and BORDERS, of various descriptions, which together with their other Goods, will be sold on very liberal terms.
Northampton, September 24, 1810. 56 tf

H. T. HOOKER
HAS JUST RECEIVED AND OFFERS FOR SALE
500 rolls French and American PAPER HANGINGS,
Bordering and Fire board Patterns.
Cognac & American Brandy,
Jamaica, St. Croix and N. E. Rum; Gin; Molasses; Salt; Sugars; Malaga, Port, Sicily, Malaga, Sherry and Malaga Wine; Philadelphia and American Porter; Salmon; Mackerel; Cod Fish; hyson, young hyson, hyson skin, souchong and boba Tea; Coffee; Rice; Spices; Capers; Almonds; Mustard; Powder and Shot; Lord's Stuff and Tobacco; Spanish and American Segars; Spermin Oil, by gallon or barrel.
India Mats, large and small.
English and American blis-
tured Steel; Nails; Spikes and Brads; Shovels and Spades.
A GENERAL ASSORTMENT OF
Morocco & Calf-skin Boots and
Shoes.
Domestic Goods.
1000 lbs. Hatting Wool;
100 doz Goat and Roan Morocco;
Calf Skins; Upper and Sole Leather.
Northampton, June 9. 71tf

Published in the *Hampshire Gazette* on June 9, 1824.

Figure 64. Advertisements for paper hangings in the *Hampshire Gazette*, 1790 – 1824.

In 1821 a manufactory for paper hangings was established in Hartford, CT, by Adrian Janes and Edwin Bolles. A sample book produced by the company survives in the collections of Old Sturbridge Village (Figure 65). The block-printed patterns, primarily with white, blue, green, tan/ochre, and black paint, are found primarily on grounds of blue, gray, and various shades of yellow/tan/ochre colors. The three earliest wallpapers found in the Parsons House are all within these parameters (see Figures 48, 49, and 62).



Figure 65. The Hartford, CT, firm of Janes & Bolles manufactured block-printed paper hangings between 1821 and 1828. Their sample pattern book survives in the collections of Old Sturbridge Village.
[\(https://www.cooperhewitt.org/2014/09/22/the-rosetta-stone-of-wallpaper/.\)](https://www.cooperhewitt.org/2014/09/22/the-rosetta-stone-of-wallpaper/)

It should be noted that during the Federal Period construction- and remodeling campaigns during Phases 2, 3, and 4 these same colors were applied repeatedly in various shades to the plaster and woodwork throughout the house. Note the colors in the wallpaper and on the painted wainscot captured by the Phase 4 door architrave around the doorway between the hall/kitchen (Rm 102) and Rm 104 (Figure 49).

Cupboard in Northeast corner of Rm 112

The north end of the paneled chimney breast wall in the parlor (Rm 112) contains scars for a large cupboard or closet-like structure, with at least three shelves above waist level. On the north wall it occupied the space between the door to Rm 109 and the paneled chimney breast wall. This cupboard measured 2 feet 10 inches wide east-to-west on the north wall and 3 feet 3 inches north-to-south on the east wall. These dimensions are indicated by carpet tack holes in the flooring as well as by the paint scars left on the walls when the feature was removed. It was topped by a crown molding like that already present on the cased beams at ceiling level as revealed by scars on the existing Phase 1B *cyma recta* and *cyma reversa* crown moldings on the north- and east wall beam casings.

Paint evidence revealed that the cupboard was likely erected late in Phase 2 or early in Phase 3, when only the first-generation Phase 2 gray-green-tan paint was on the woodwork. It remained in place through the next two paint campaigns before it was removed, likely during Phase 4, when a second generation of tan yellow paint was applied to the woodwork in this room. This paint was

the first layer of paint discovered over the first-generation gray-green-tan paint applied to the new paneled chimney breast wall. It is likely that the Phase 2 corner cupboard in the southwest corner of the room (see Figure 55) was removed when this cupboard in the northeast corner was constructed.

A photograph of the northeast corner of the parlor c.1940 shows a bookcase built against the north and east walls in the same location as the earlier cupboard (Figure 66).



Figure 66.

View of the parlor (Rm 112) c.1940 with Anna Bliss. The bookcase in the corner behind Anna Bliss extending along the north and east walls occupies the same approximate space as the Phase 3-4 cupboard. The bookcase seen in the photograph was removed in the late 1980s. (Photograph courtesy of Historic Northampton.)

Rms 109 and 110

Undoubtedly the ground-floor rooms in the former rear lean-to underwent some alterations during this period, as the removal of the saltbox roof of the rear lean-to and the addition of the second story during the Phase 3 improvements caused considerable disruption in this space. It is possible that the ceilings of the ground floor

rooms were lathed and plastered once the raising of the rear pile to two stories was accomplished. As mentioned earlier, partitions dividing the ground floor of the rear pile into three rooms, with the staircase forming the partition between Rms 109 and 104) and a board partition at the west end dividing Rm 109 from Rm 110, may have been created during Phase 2: the stairs to provide access to the lean-to garret, the west partition to form a small bedroom or pantry. The east wall of the staircase, still in its original location (see Figure 30), is composed of vertical boards nailed to the east side of the whitewashed floor joist overhead; it was very clearly erected before the ceiling was plastered, but it may have been built *just* before the ceiling was plastered. The partition wall between Rms 109 and 110 and the cabinet cupboard built against the east side of the partition were erected *after* the lathed and plastered ceiling was in place. Therefore, it is possible that this west partition wall and cabinet/cupboard were created during Phase 4, during the period when Rm 109 served as the only kitchen in the house (Figure 67).

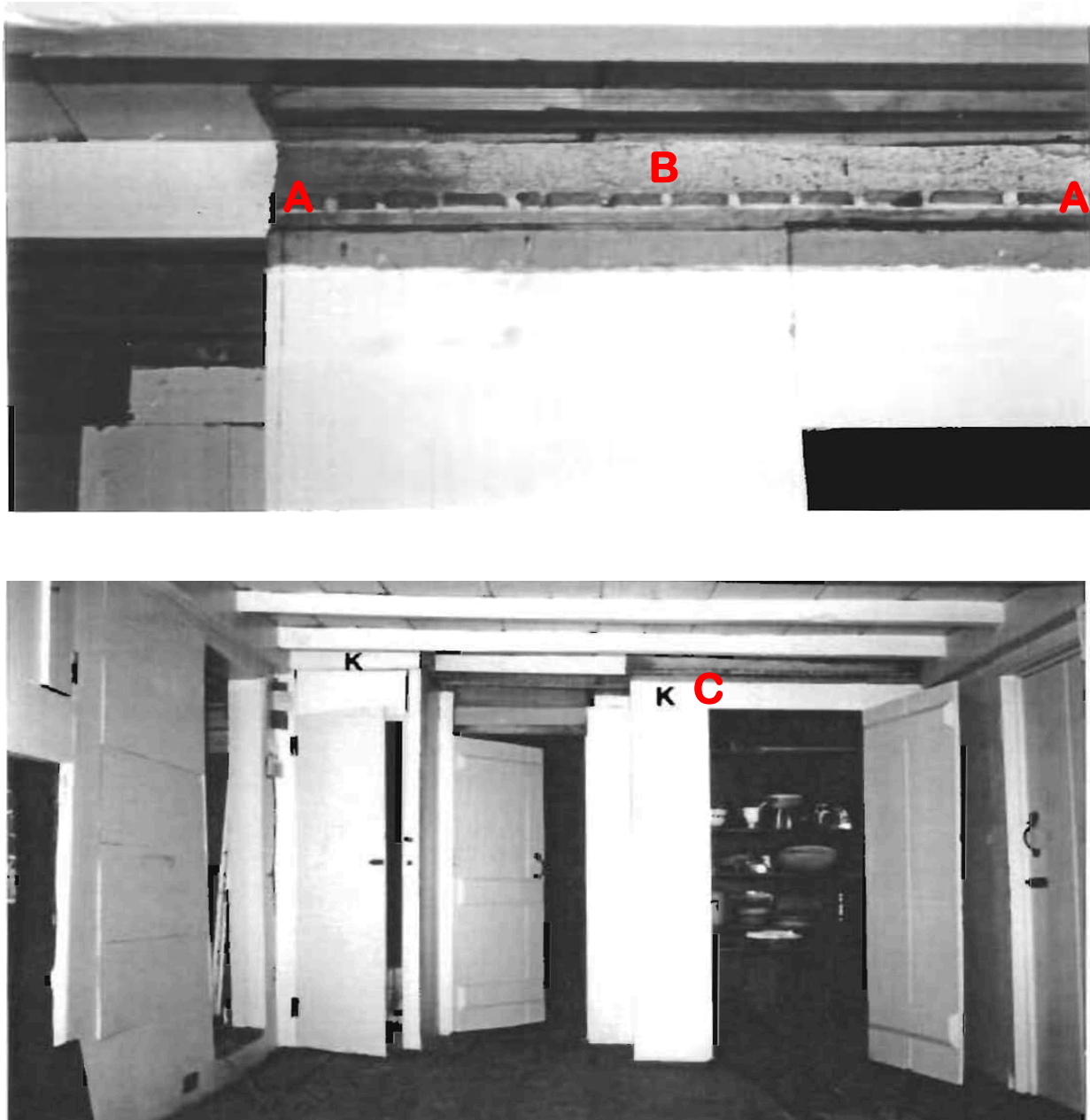
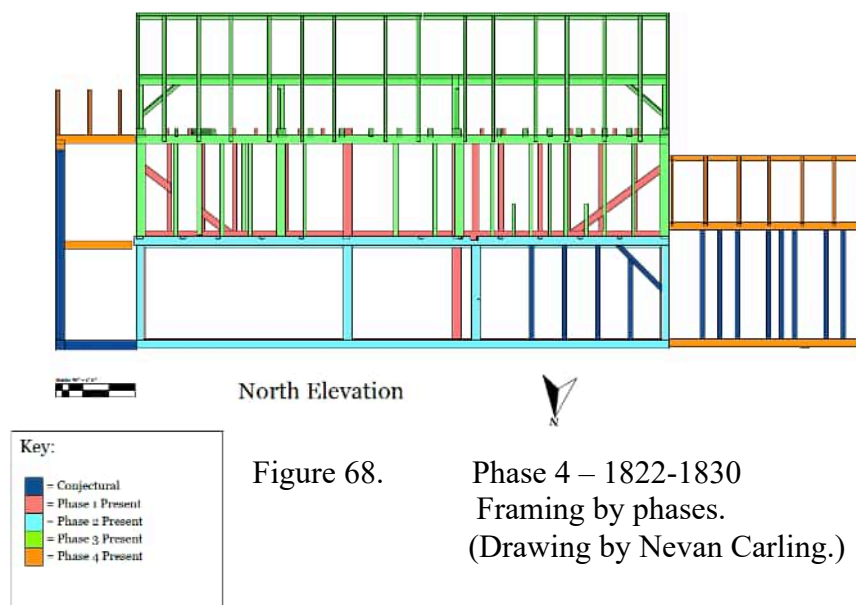


Figure 67. Top - View of the upper section of the present cabinet erected against the east side of the partition wall between Rms 109 and 110. **A** indicates the lath and plaster applied to the underside of the Phase 2 joists. **B** is the whitewashed joist to which the lath and plaster were applied. Clearly the cabinet/cupboard and the partitions wall behind it were erected sometime after the ceiling was lathed and plastered, as the plastered ceiling continued westward uninterrupted over the cupboard and partition wall.

Bottom - View of the existing west wall of Rm 109. **C** marks the location of the above view.
(Photographs from Clancy and Leeke, 1992.)

**Phase 4 – 1822-1830 – Construction of the West- and East Wings;
Second Federal Period Remodeling of the West Parlor (Rm 112)
and the Hall-Kitchen (Rm 102)**

The Parsons House – and the Wright family which owned and occupied the house during this period - experienced another series of changes/improvements during the decade of the 1820s. On the family front, Daniel Wright died in 1824, leaving his widow Chloe (age 60), his son Ferdinand Hunt (age 40) and his wife Olive (age 37), and their three daughters (born 1822, 1823, and 1824). Two years before Daniel Wright's death the one-story west wing with its own chimney and fireplace was added.⁹¹ The original purpose and function of this room is not known. Was it a ground floor bedroom for an elderly man (or for both the elderly Daniel and Chloe)? Or was it an office or study where Daniel and/or Ferdinand could work on their personal affairs and their legal, political-, and financial consulting? Around the same time, or perhaps several years later, a two-story addition was made on the east gable end of the house. The east walls of the first- and second-floor rear-pile rooms along the east gable end of the house (Rms 104 and 203) were removed and those two rooms were extended eastward approximately six feet, enlarging both rooms (Figures 68, 69). A chimney was constructed in the new east wall of the addition and fireplaces were created in these enlarged rooms on both the first- and second floors. This brought the number of rooms in the house with fireplaces to six, and left five rooms (excluding the first-floor entry and second-floor landing) without fireplaces.



⁹¹ Dendrochronology dating of framing timbers in the floor and roof provided dates for the felling of the trees from which the framing members were fashioned as 1820 and 1821. (Flynt, "Dendrochronology Study", 2024.) Both the west wing and east wing were constructed without cellars on shallow stone foundations.

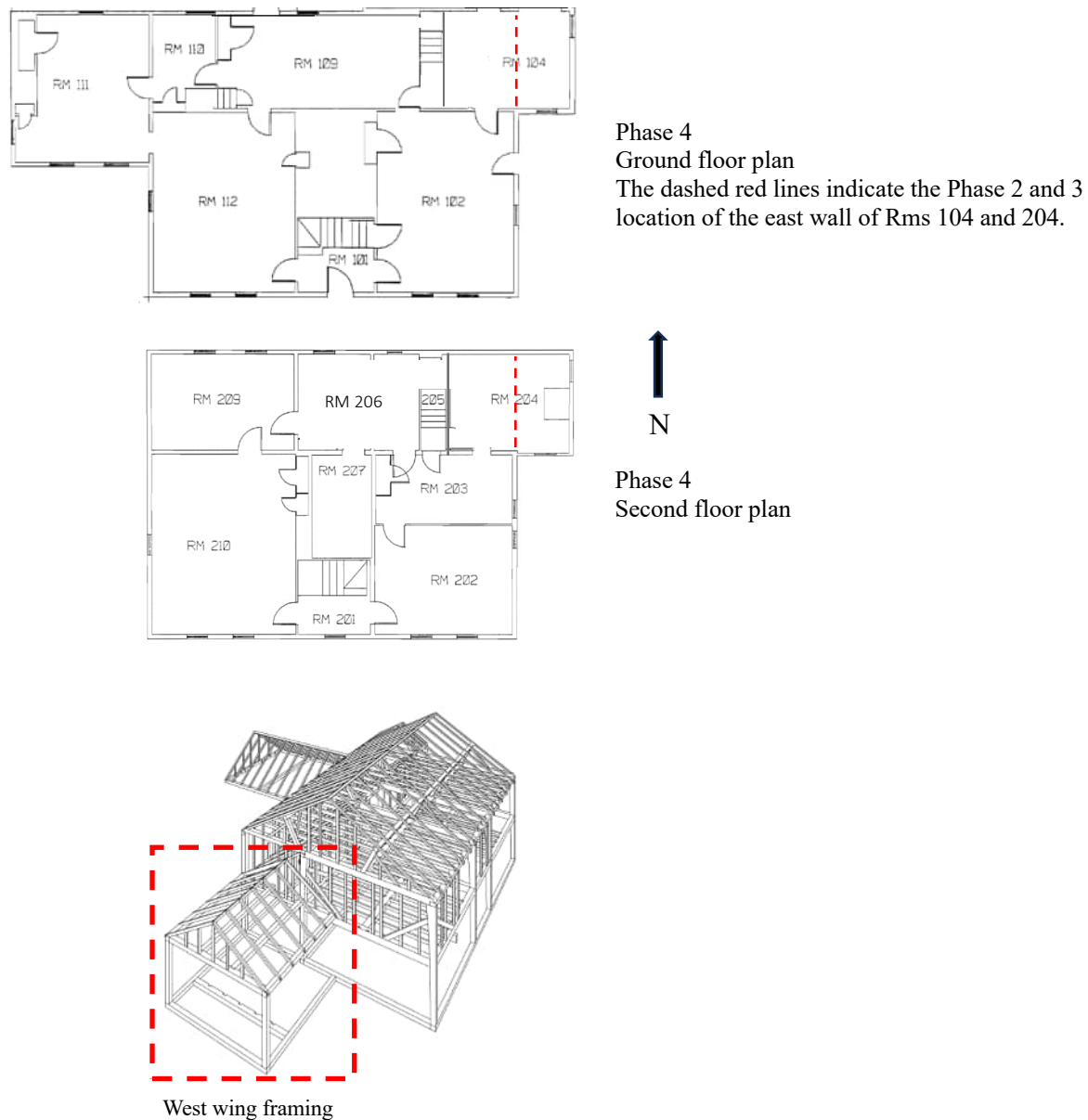


Figure 69. Phase 4 floor plans (Clancey and Leeke, 1992, adapted by Myron O. Stachiw, 2026);
West wing framing (Drawing by Nevan Carling).

A careful examination of the framing of the east- and west wings clearly indicates that the construction of these additions occurred separately from the construction of the Phase 2 rear lean-to and from the Phase 3 raising of the rear pile of the house to two stories (Figures 68, 69). The rear plate of the enlarged structure is in two parts: a long timber inserted during the Phase 3 raising of the rear pile that extends from the northwest corner of the Phase 3 house to a point even with the east walls of Rms 202 and 203, and a short timber which extends eastward from the Phase 3 rear plate to the east gable end of the east addition (Rm 204). A similar short timber forms the south plate of the east wing on the section which projects eastward from the east gable

end of the house. No joinery connects the short plates of the east wing to the Phase 3 structure. The north plate of the west wing is tenoned into the northwest corner post of the house while the south plate and longitudinal girts and the south plate of the west wing rest atop the second floor girt in the west gable end of the Phase 3 structure. At sill level the north- and south sills of the west wing are joined to the west sill of the house. The roof frame of the west wing consists of common rafters and a board ridge – the only instance of a board ridge in the entire structure, with the rafters nailed to the board ridge rather than joined to more substantial ridge pole with mortise and tenon joinery, as is found in the enlarged Phase 3 roof over the house and in the Phase 5 roof of the rear kitchen ell. The relatively short roof of the east wing consists of only three rafter pairs, nailed together at their peak, without a ridge board.

Presently the north sill beneath the east wing (Rm 104) and beneath a portion of Rm 109 is a reused timber – a former plate with numerous step-lap mortises for rafters. It is unclear how far westward beneath Rm 109 this timber extends, as access to the timber was limited beyond the midpoint of Rm 109. The reuse of this salvaged former plate as a sill likely occurred sometime in the 19th century, possibly during Phase 5 when the rear kitchen ell was constructed against the rear wall of the house behind Rms 104 and Rm 109.

The West Wing - Rm 111

The erection of the west wing required the creation of two new doorways: one through the west wall of Rm 110 (this may have been the location of a window during Phase 3), and a second through the west wall of the parlor (Rm 112). The single room of the west wing included a chimney and fireplace on the west wall, with a shallow closet or cupboard on the north side of the fireplace, and four windows: two on the south wall, one on the west wall south of the chimney and fireplace, and two on the north wall. All four windows had solid interior wood shutters; only the shutters on the north wall window remain in place. The fireplace was surrounded by a handsome Federal Period mantelpiece, very similar in character and form to the mantelpieces installed during Phase 4 in the parlor (Rm 112), former hall/kitchen (Rm 102) (see Figures 73,72), ground-floor- (Figure 71) and second-floor rooms of the east wing, suggesting that the improvements in all of these rooms were related and part of a single building/remodeling campaign over several years during the 1820s and early 1830s. The first paint campaign on the woodwork in this room was the application of a tan yellow paint over a primer, similar to the paint in Rm 112 and other rooms in the house at this time.

This room has undergone little change since its construction, other than the application of wallpaper and paint on the woodwork, and removal of the shutters from the south and west windows.

The East Wing - Rms 104, 204

When the east wing was constructed, the Phase 3 Rms 104 and 204 were only a little more than one-half of the size of the present rooms (Figure 69).

Rm 104

On the west side of the room was the vertical board wall of the Phase 3 staircase which was accessed from Rm 109 rather than from Rm 104 as at present. It is not known if a doorway existed at the south end of this west wall to Rm 109, the large central room of the rear pile which contained a fireplace and bake oven and functioned as one of two existing kitchens in the house

during Phases 2 and 3, as that evidence was removed in the last quarter of the 20th century. This portion of the west wall is now within a late 20th century closet along the west wall of Rm 104. The north wall was sheathed with wide feather-edged and molded horizontal boards, continuous from Rm 109 (Figure 29). Again, it is not known if a window or a doorway to the rear yard existed in the north wall of the room or if a window or doorway existed in the east wall; however, it is very likely that at least one window provided light to this room. Presently a single window exists on the east wall on the north side of the chimney mass and fireplace, and a doorway in the north wall opens into the Phase 5 kitchen wing. A large diagonal brace in the north wall which rose from the northeast corner post of the Phase 2 and 3 structure was removed to create this doorway, likely during Phase 5 when the kitchen wing was erected.



Figure 70.
Above - View of the east elevation of the Parsons House, looking to the southwest. The Phase 4 two-story east wing is in the center (marked **A**), and the surviving section of the Phase 5 rear kitchen ell is at right. **B** represents an added cupboard on the north wall of Rm 104.



Left - View of the cupboard on the north wall of Rm 104. The red dashed line indicates the location of the Phase 2 and 3 northeast corner post of the house and the location of the Phase 2 and 3 east wall. Originally double doors closed off the cupboard from Rm 104. Note the very clear settling of the cupboard shelves above the counter to the right or east, a result of settling due to deteriorated sills. The counter below the shelves was raised several inches at its east end, likely during the 20th century, to provide a level countertop. It has not been determined during this study whether the cupboard was erected during Phase 4 or during Phase 5 when the adjacent kitchen wing was constructed (Photographs by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)



Figure 71.

Top– The mantelpiece applied during Phase 4 in Rm 104.

Bottom– Detail view of the mantelpiece in Rm 104.

(Photographs by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

The mantelpiece applied to the chimney on the east wall of the enlarged Rm 104 (Figure 71) closely resembled the three mantelpieces installed in the parlor (Rm 112), the former hall/kitchen (Rm 102), and the west wing (Rm 111) in Federal Period stylistic form, but differed in the decorative details. (Figures 73, 72, and 74). These differences suggest, at the least, that the Rm 104 mantelpiece was clearly executed by a different craftsman from the craftsman or craftsmen which created the other two mantelpieces, and perhaps at some interval of time. Although most painted surfaces in this room have been stripped of their earlier paint history, evidence was

discovered that the mantelpiece was originally painted a black color like the mantelpiece in Rm 102.



Figure 72.
Left, above and below -
Two views of the Phase 4
mantelpiece applied in the
former hall/kitchen Rm 102.
Photographs by Myron O.
Stachiw, 2024.)





Figure 73
View of the Phase 4
mantelpiece applied to the east
wall of the parlor (Rm 112).
This mantelpiece replaced a
Phase 3 fireplace surround
composed of bold bolection
molding (see Figures 48, 49).
(Photograph by Myron O.
Stachiw, 2024.)



Figure 74.
Mantelpiece installed in Rm 111 in the west
wing during Phase 4. (Photograph by Laurie
Sanders, 2026.)

Rm 204

As in the room below (Rm 104), a fireplace was added to this enlarged room on the east wall, similar to size and shape to that in Rm 104. This room served as a bedroom. It was provided with a single window in the east wall. Currently a closet exists over the rear staircase in the northwest corner of the room, but it is not an original Phase 4 feature, as a closed-in window was discovered on the north wall in this closet which clearly preceded the creation of this closet. During Phases 3 and 4 the window lit the rear staircase, and the west wall between the staircase and Rm 104 continued across the wall uninterrupted. Currently doorways exist in the west wall opening into the rear staircase and in the north wall opening into Rm 203. The doorway into Rm 203 appears to be the original Phase 4 access into this room based on paint evidence. Earliest paint layers are yellow tan found as the first paint on the mantelpiece, and second layer on the door- and door architrave in the south wall over a gray tan paint (a possible primer).

Rm 112 – Parlor

Phase 4 alterations in the parlor were relatively minor cosmetic changes, triggered by the construction of the west wing in 1822. In terms of physical changes, the most noticeable was the replacement of the Phase 2 bolection molding fireplace surround with a stylish Federal Period mantelpiece (Figures 52, 53, 73). The new mantelpiece received as its first painted finish a tan orange paint which was also applied on the paneled chimney breast wall, wainscot, and most other woodwork in the room. This tan orange paint was the first layer applied to the door architrave in the west wall which was created to provide access to the new west wing (Rm 111), thus linking the construction of the west wing to the installation of the new mantelpiece in the parlor (Figures 73, 75).

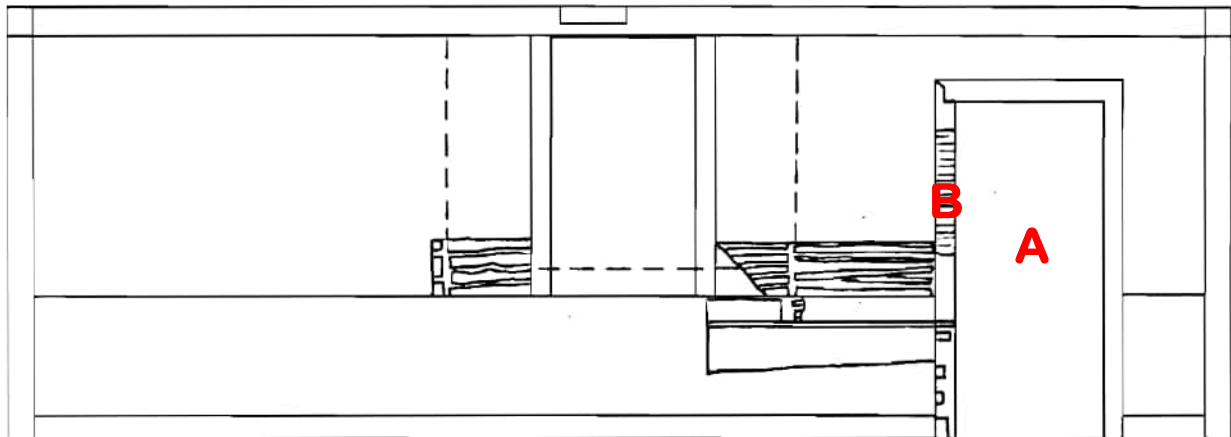


Figure 75. Diagram of the west wall of the parlor - Rm 112. **A** represents the Phase 4 doorway created to allow access to the newly-constructed west wing (Rm 111) from the parlor. **B** indicates the location of the surviving Phase 3 wallpaper which covered the walls of the room at the time that the Phase 4 west wing was constructed (see Figure 62). It is likely that this wallpaper remained on the walls of the parlor for a while longer as the next three paint campaigns on the parlor's woodwork involved some variation of a tan yellow paint. (Clancey and Leeke, 1992.)

The Phase 2 doorway on the north wall leading to Rm 109 in the rear pile was enlarged, and a new door and door architrave were applied to match the architrave on the newly installed doorway to the west wing. This required the relocation of the east door stud about 6 inches to

the east. This alteration triggered the removal of the Phase 3 corner cupboard located between the doorway to Rm 109 and the paneled chimney breast wall.

When the paneled chimney breast wall and wainscot were applied during Phase 2 in Rm 112 there were no applied baseboards over the wainscot. Instead, contrasting mopboards were painted directly on the lower six inches of the wainscot (Figure 76). During Phase 3 or 4 molded polychrome baseboards were applied to the wainscot: the lower flat face of the baseboards was painted a brown black, and the upper ogee-molded section was painted a lighter tan yellow brown color (Figure 77). Similar polychrome baseboards were applied during Phase 3 or 4 in the front entry (Rm 101) and in the former hall/kitchen (Rm 102).



Figure 76. Detail view of the lower edge of the chimney breast paneling in Rm 112 after removal of the applied Phase 4 baseboard. **A** indicates the Phase 2 dark brown painted mopboard on the lower end of the rails and stiles of the paneled wall. The same painted mopboard was also found on the wainscot on the other walls in Rm 112. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)



Figure 77. Reused polychrome baseboard fragment found in Rm 102. This same combination of light and dark paints on the baseboard was found in several rooms in the house applied over the earlier painted mopboards. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

Rm 102 – Former hall/kitchen

The former hall/kitchen underwent a significant remodeling and repurposing during Phase 4. This room functioned as the sole kitchen in the house between 1719 and c.1800-1810, when a second kitchen was constructed in the new Phase 2 rear lean-to. The construction of the new, larger rear lean-to was accompanied by a replacement of the Phase 1 chimney by a new chimney now containing four fireboxes and two bake ovens. The bake ovens, constructed in the new preferred form of locating the mouths of the bake ovens outside of the firebox, faced into the rear lean-to kitchen (Rm 109) and into the original hall/kitchen (Figure 78).

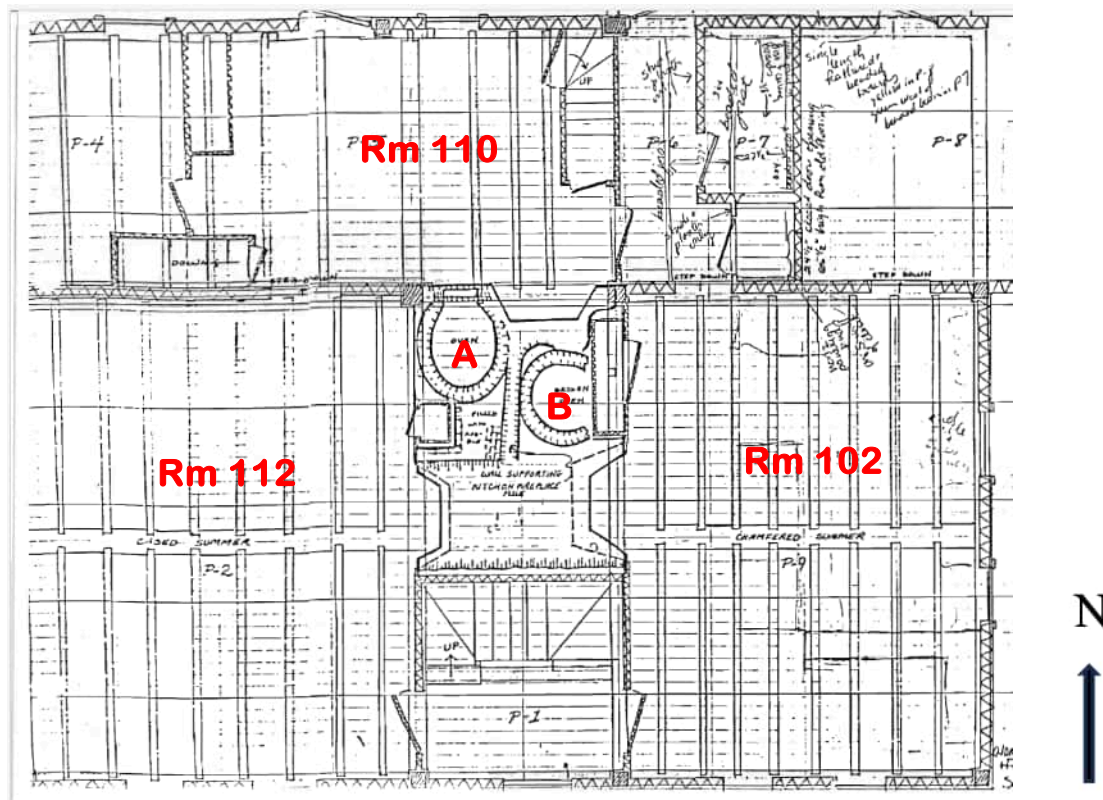
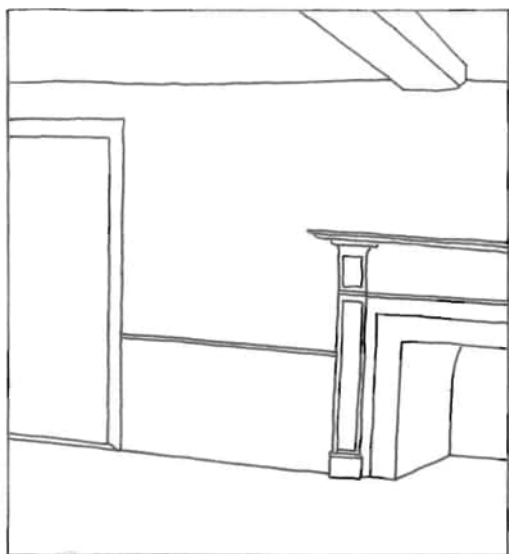


Figure 78. 1981 drawing of the ground floor of the Parsons House. **A** indicates the intact bake oven which opened into Rm 109. **B** indicates the partially dismantled bake oven which was built to open into Rm 102. The mouth of this oven and a portion of the brick dome of the oven were dismantled during Phase 4 when the paneled chimney breast wall was partially dismantled, a new lathed- and plastered wall was erected several inches in front of it, the firebox was reduced in size, and a wall cabinet or cupboard was erected in front of the partially-dismantled bake oven **B**. With the addition of a new stylish Federal Period mantelpiece the former hall/kitchen was transformed into a dining room. **C** indicates the original location of the Phase 3 stairs to the second-floor rear pile rooms. **D** indicates the location of the relocated stairs in 1981. They were moved to this location in the early 20th century when a bathroom was installed in their former location. The drawing does not show the Phase 4 east- and west wing, nor the Phase 5 kitchen wing, all of which existed in 1981. (Drawing by Nancy Rexford, 1981, Historic Northampton Archives.)

The two kitchens coexisted until the Phase 4 construction of the east- and west wings and related improvements through the 1820s. The remodeling of the former hall/kitchen

and its transformation to a dining room was likely triggered by the passing of the elderly Daniel Wright in 1824, which removed the earlier need for two separate kitchens to serve the households of Daniel and Chloe Wright and of Ferdinand and Olive Wright and their children.

This transformation involved the partial dismantling of the Phase 2 paneled chimney breast wall; reduction in size of the Phase 2 firebox; partial dismantling of the bake oven mouth and a portion of the brick oven dome; dismantling of the Phase 2 wall cupboard at the north end of the west wall and construction of a new wall cupboard in front of the partially dismantled bake oven; and erection of a new lathed- and plastered wall in front of the fireplace and extending to the north wall. A new, stylish Federal Period mantelpiece was applied to the rebuilt firebox (Figure 72), and painted black⁹². In the process of rebuilding the chimney breast wall, the doorway just to the south of the firebox which led to the excavated cellar beneath the west half of the house was closed-in, covered by lath and plaster (Figures 79, 80). A new staircase to the west cellar was created in the southwest corner of the rear pile (Rm 110), opening from Rm 109.



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Figure 79. Left – Drawing of the Phase 4 chimney breast wall in Rm 102 after the cellar stairs were relocated to the southwest corner of Rm 110 during the Phase 4 remodeling. At that time the former door opening was lathed and plastered. Note the settling in the floor from left to right in both the drawing and photograph as indicated by the level of the ceiling and the fireplace mantelpiece. (Drawing from Clancey and Leeke, 1992.)

Right – view of the chimney breast wall of Rm 102 during the 1980s restoration. Cellar stairs to the new cellar under Rm 102 were built and the former doorway to the west cellar, closed-in and covered with lath and plaster during Phase 4, was reopened and reconstructed. During this project ceiling plaster was removed, but the lath was left in place and covered with sheetrock. (Photograph from Clancey and Leeke, 1992.)

⁹² It is noted that the Phase 4 mantelpiece in Rm 104 was also painted black as its earliest paint color.

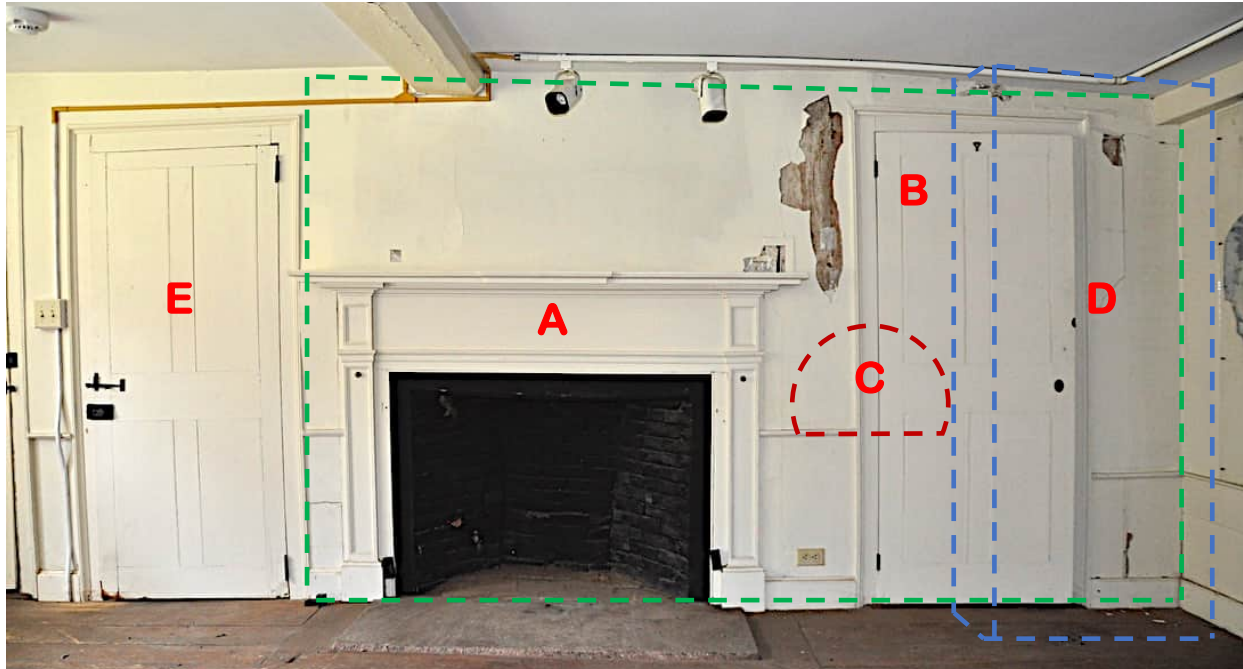


Figure 80.

Above - View of the west wall of the former hall/kitchen with Phase 4 changes (A, B, C, D) and the 1981 reconstruction of the Phases 1 – 3 doorway to the staircase to the west cellar E.⁹³ A is the new Federal Style mantelpiece applied during Phase 4; B is the doorway to the new Phase 4 cupboard; C and the red dashed lines) mark the location of the partially-dismantled Phase 2-3 bake oven, no longer needed when this room was repurposed as a formal dining room. D and blue dashed lines mark the location of the Phase 2-3 cupboard, dismantled during the Phase 4 remodeling. The area within the green dashed lines mark the new lathed and plastered wall which was built out during Phase 4 in front of the partially-dismantled Phase 2 paneled chimney breast wall. This new wall terminated at the north wall approximately three inches out from the original Phase 2 wall. (Photographs by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

Left - View of the interior of the Phase 4 cupboard B on the west wall of Rm 102. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

The 1992 SPNEA investigation discovered what was interpreted as the remnants of an overmantel painting on the west wall of Rm 102. In their limited excavation in this location only a small corner of what appeared to be a painted frame of a larger decorative treatment was revealed. This frame was painted with green, gray, and yellow distemper paint (Figures 81, 82). It was believed that this revealed painted corner represented the only surviving portions of an early Federal Period overmantel decorative treatment, contemporary with the Phase 2 Federal

⁹³ The recreation of this doorway during the 1981 “restoration” work on the house was an ill-conceived project. Its purpose was to provide access to the newly-rebuilt cellar stairs which provided access to the new cellar created in 1981 under this room. At the time it was not considered that this very doorway and cellar staircase were *removed* at the time that the present mantelpiece and west wall configuration (minus the doorway to the cellar) were installed. Nathaniel Parsons House Historic Structures Report
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style remodeling. Removal of the modern skim coat of plaster in other areas above the mantelpiece revealed the same plaster as found under the painted border, but no evidence of paint. This suggests that the large rectangular space within the painted border was covered by a large object or an applied wallpaper mural.

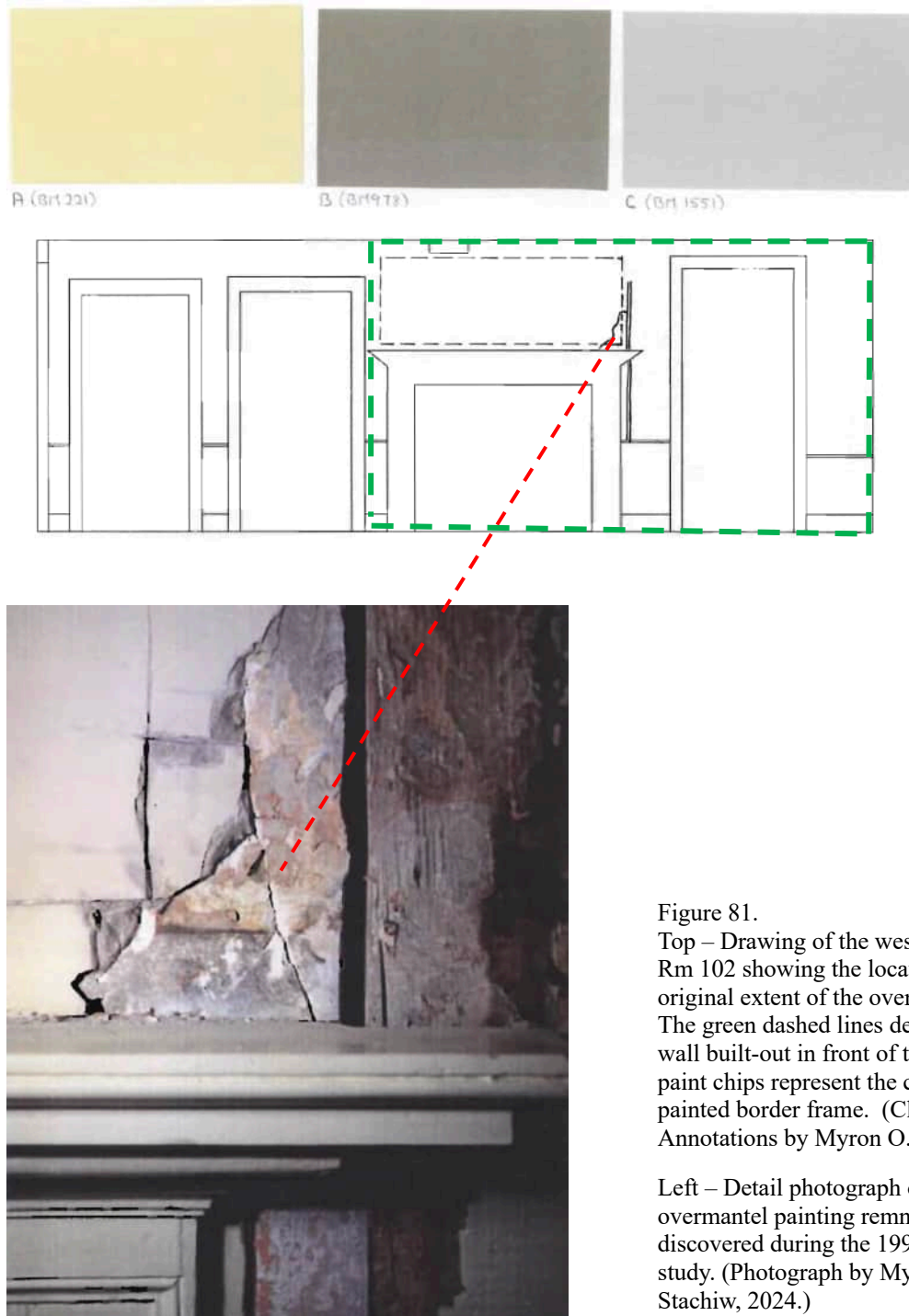


Figure 81.

Top – Drawing of the west chimney breast wall of Rm 102 showing the location and conjectural original extent of the overmantel painted area. The green dashed lines define the section of the wall built-out in front of the Phase 2 wall. The paint chips represent the colors found in the painted border frame. (Clancey and Leeke, 1992. Annotations by Myron O. Stachiw, 2026.)

Left – Detail photograph of the overmantel painting remnant discovered during the 1992 SPNEA study. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)



Figure 82. Top – View of the expanded excavation through the plaster above the mantelpiece in Rm 102 undertaken to reveal the full extent of the overmantel decorative painting. The red dashed line indicates the degree of settling which occurred since the early-mid 19th century due to the deterioration of the north sill of the house. The mantelpiece had settled with the walls and floor, but during the 1981 renovations, which included leveling the floor in this room, the mantelpiece was removed and reapplied over the newly-leveled floor and fireplace hearth.

Bottom – Detail of the painted overmantel decoration. The central portion of the plaster above the mantel shelf did not reveal any paint, suggesting that only a border was painted around a rectangular element – a mirror, a painting, or a wallpaper mural. Later in the 19th- and 20th centuries numerous layers of wallpaper were applied and removed, finally covering the old plaster in 1981 with a new plaster skim coat. (Photographs by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

This interpretation was based on the assumption that the existing (Phase 4) mantelpiece and wall surface behind it were the Federal Period treatment installed during Phase 2. New building archaeology excavations on the west wall of Rm 102 undertaken during the current study exposed the presence of the surviving elements of the Phase 2 paneled chimney breast (see Figure 38) beneath the new Phase 4 wall erected several inches in front of the former Phase 2 paneled wall. Nail evidence from the lath and furring strips to which the lath was attached indicated the use of both Type 1 (c.1795 – 1810) and Type 2 (c.1810-1830) nails in the fabrication of this new wall.

The 1992 SPNEA investigation revealed that the doorway on the north wall of Rm 102 to Rm 109 was enlarged, made wider and taller, and a new architrave was applied around the enlarged doorway (Figure 15). New building archaeology around this doorway revealed that the enlargement of this doorway from its original width of 25 inches to 32 inches required the removal and relocation of the west door stud about seven inches to the west, as indicated by an empty mortise in the girt above. As a result, the interior Phase 1 horizontal board sheathing was cut back to the edge of the relocated stud. At the same time, the floor in this room was leveled; it was raised approximately 5 inches, as indicated by the cut in the lowest Phase 1 sheathing board (Figure 83).

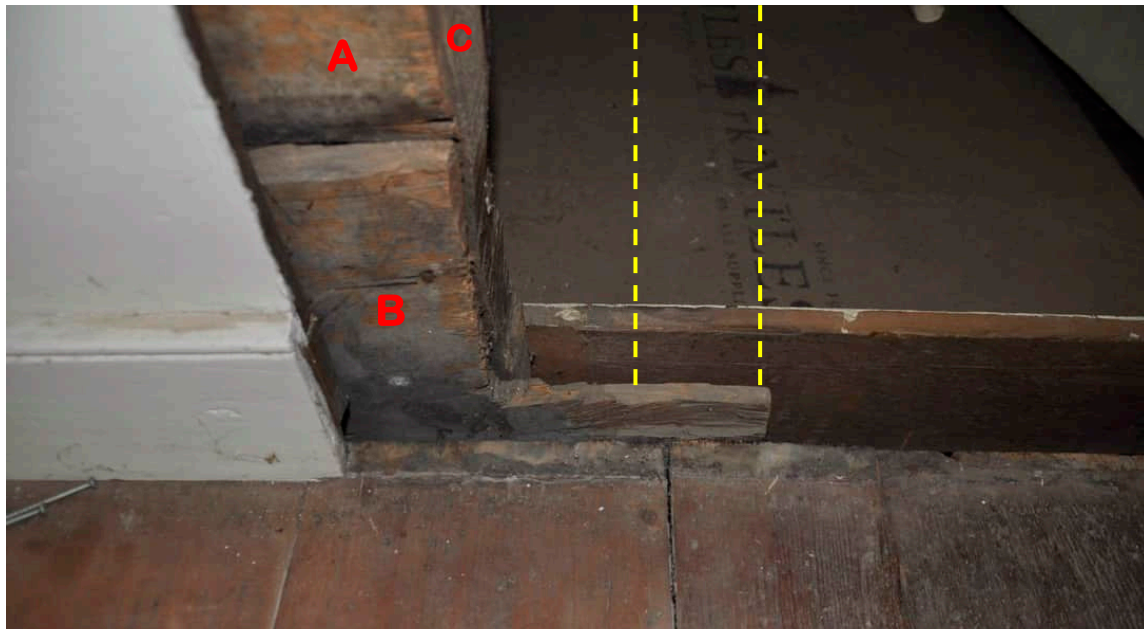


Figure 83. View of the lower west edge of the doorway from Rm 102 to Rm 109. **A** and **B** indicate the two lower surviving Phase 1 wall sheathing boards. **A** and **B** (and the boards above) were cut back more than six inches when the doorway was enlarged during Phase 4. The Phase 1 edge of the lower sheathing board **B** (to the right of the yellow dashed lines indicating the Phase 1 stud location) marks the west edge of the smaller Phases 1-3 door opening. Note that the sheathing board continues down below the present floor level about five inches, but the cut in the sheathing board aligns with the present floor level. This indicates how much the floor was raised during the Phase 4 leveling. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

At the time of the Phase 4 remodeling and floor leveling, the lower portion of the Rm 102 walls was covered by board wainscoting applied during Phase 2. Building archaeology in 2024 revealed a surviving lower portion of the wainscoting below the present level of the floor, still attached to a stud at its west end. The Phase 2-3 wainscot on the west side of the smaller doorway, which extended from the west edge of the doorway to the Phase 2-3 cupboard on the west wall, was cut back after the floor was leveled and removed, leaving the section below floor level in place (Figure 84).

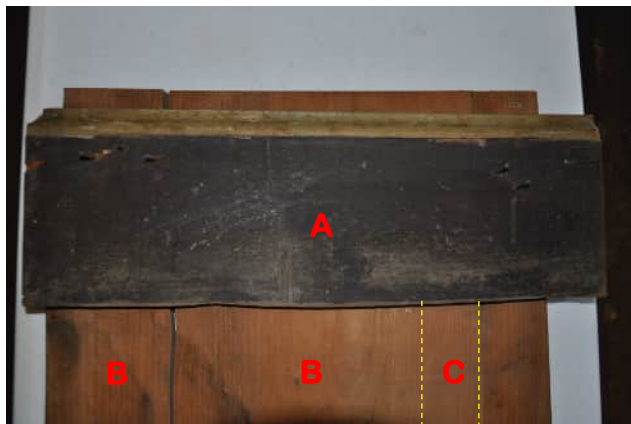
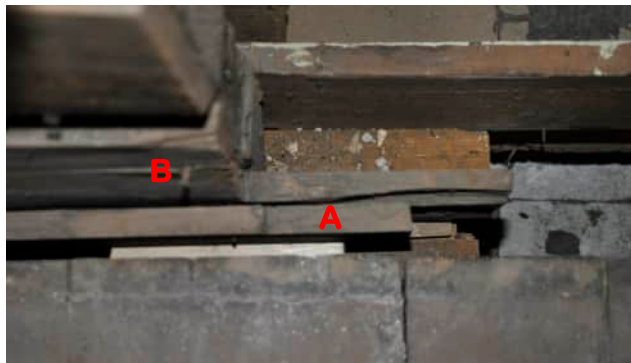


Figure 84.

Above left – view looking down at the floor at the west edge of the doorway from Rm 102 to Rm 109. **B** marks the lowest Phase 1 sheathing board which was cut when the doorway was enlarged during Phase 4 (**B** in Figure 83). **A** marks the Phase 2 wainscot which was left in place when the upper section was cut away at the time the doorway was enlarged. Note that the right edge of the cut-off wainscot board **A** stops about 2 inches short of the edge of **B** at the Phase 1 door opening. This indicates the width of the architrave which surrounded the door opening during Phases 1-3.

Above right – View of the wainscot board cut off at the raised Phase 4 floor level. A nail still holds the left end of the wainscot fragment to a stud. Note that the wainscot reveals the second Phase 2 paint colors applied to the woodwork in Rm 102: the wainscot was painted tan yellow with a red-painted mopboard over the tan yellow (see Figure 41 for a photomicrograph of the paint layers from wainscot in Rm 102 at mopboard level). This lower part of the wainscot does not show the later Phase 3 paint colors applied to the wainscot because during Phase 3 a molded polychrome baseboard was applied to the wainscot in both the hall/kitchen (Rm 102) and the parlor (Rm 112) which covered and preserved the earlier painted mopboard.

Bottom - A piece of Phase 3 polychromed baseboard **A** from Rm 102 nailed to the back of two boards **B** used to create a section of wainscoting applied to the north wall of Rm 102. This section of wainscot was applied after the Phase 2 cupboard in the northwest corner of the room was removed and the doorway to Rm 109 was enlarged during Phase 4. Originally this section of baseboard was applied to the Phase 2-3 section of the wainscot on the north wall between the smaller doorway and the cupboard. The new section of wainscot held together by the baseboard was applied to the north wall extending from the edge of the architrave on the enlarged doorway westward to the new Phase 4 west wall. This new section of wainscot did not have the earlier Phase 2-3 paint colors. One of the boards forming this section of wainscot was left-over lumber from the construction of the new Phase 4 cupboard shelves on the west wall (Figure 80). It contained a planed channel **C** identical to those on the new cupboard shelves (defined by the yellow dashed lines) which allowed plates and platters to be stood upright on their edge. (Photographs by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

With the removal of the Phase 2 cupboard just to the west of the doorway to Rm 109 and the widening of that doorway, new wainscot was applied to the space between the doorway and the new cupboard erected on the new west wall of the room (Figure 85). These new sections of wainscot very clearly confirmed that they were different from the Phase 2 wainscoting remaining on the north, east, and south walls and applied much later.: they lacked the Phase 2 and 3 paint layers that were applied to all of the wainscot in the room.

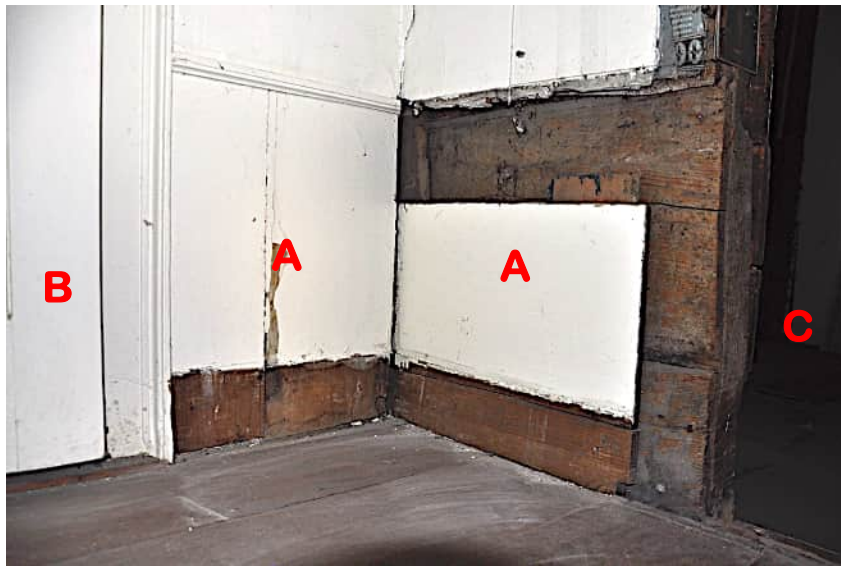


Figure 85. – View of the northwest corner of Rm 102. **A** marks the new Phase 4 wainscot applied to the west- and north walls after Doorway **C** to Rm 109 was enlarged and when the west wall of the room was built-out with a new Federal style mantelpiece and a new cupboard **B**. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

The doorway on the north wall to Rm 104 was likely created during Phase 4, as the function of that room, enlarged during Phase 4 with the erection of the east wing and with the addition of a fireplace, had changed.⁹⁴ The doorway to Rm 109 was enlarged to match the new doorway into Rm 109, with a similar architrave applied around both door openings.

⁹⁴ In Figures 40, 41, and 48 only the first-generation blue wallpaper survived and was covered by the new architrave to the enlarged doorway. The second-generation wallpaper found under the architrave to the doorway from Rm 102 to Rm 104 (Figure 49) was apparently removed during the enlargement of the doorway to Rm 109.

Rm 109 – Kitchen in the Rear Pile of the house

With the remodeling of the former hall/kitchen (Rm 102) into a dining room, Rm 109, with its cooking fireplace and bake oven, became the primary kitchen until the new rear kitchen ell was constructed during Phase 5 (c.1830-1840). It is possible that this space was improved at this time with the construction of the new partition wall between Rms 109 and 110 and the cupboard on the Rm 109-side of the partition wall (Figure 86). The construction of this partition wall appears to coincide with the relocation of the staircase to the west cellar from Rm 102 to the south wall of Rm 110, with another small cupboard erected at the west end of the new cellar staircase.

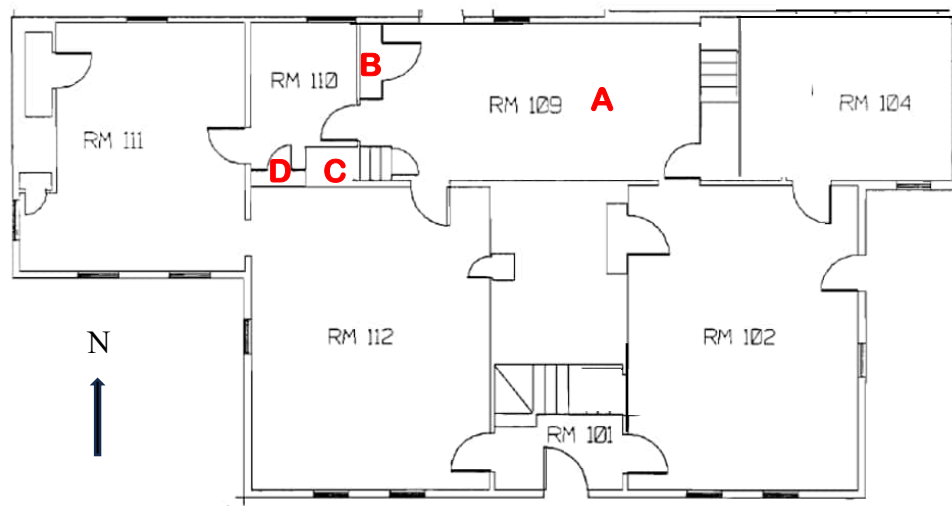


Figure 86. Plan of the Phase 4 ground floor. **A** indicates the kitchen in Rm 109; **B** indicates the new partition wall and cupboard between Rms 110 and 109; **C** indicates the location of the new enclosed staircase to the west cellar under Rm 112; and **D** indicates a new cupboard erected over the new cellar stairs. Note – the five fireplaces in Rms 102, 104, 109 (with bake oven), 111, and 112 are not shown on this drawing. (Floor plan drawing from Clancey and Leeke, 1992; annotations by Myron O. Stachiw 2026.)

The new location of a staircase to the west cellar in Rm 110 required excavation and reconstruction of the north cellar wall to accommodate the staircase, as its location was on the north side of the north sill of the house. It also included removing a portion of the south sill and several joists of the former rear lean-to to accommodate the cellar staircase (Figure 87).

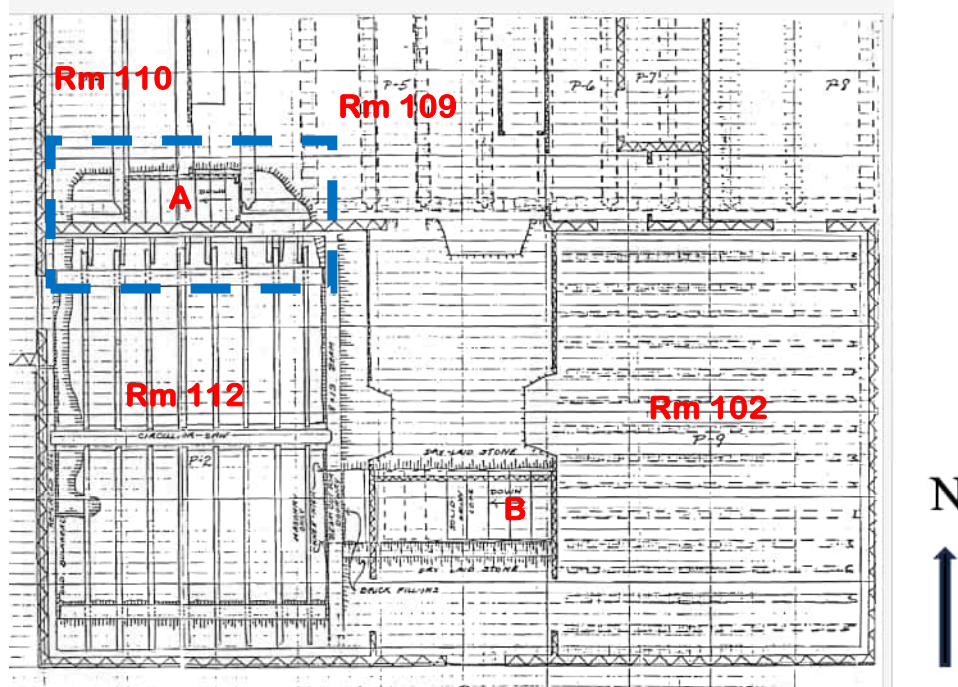


Figure 87. 1981 drawing of the ground floor framing of the house (less the east-and west wings and rear kitchen ell). The blue rectangle indicates the location of the new Phase 4 west cellar stairs A and the excavation and alteration made to the north foundation wall of the west cellar. These stairs replaced the original location B of the cellar stairs in Phases 1-3. (Drawing by Nancy Rexford, Historic Northampton Archives. Annotations by Myron O. Stachiw, 2026.)

Second Floor Rooms – 202, 203, 208, 209

There is little evidence of alterations to these rooms during Phase 4. In all of these rooms traces of early tan yellow paint on some elements is followed by variations of gray followed by multiple layers of off-white /cream-colored paints. It is very difficult to determine when any of these paint layers went on, as the woodwork in these rooms is minimal and quite plain.

Phase 5 – Construction of the Rear Kitchen Ell – c.1830-1840

The final major construction carried out on the Parsons House during the 19th century was the erection of the one-story rear kitchen ell and attached one-story woodshed and barn/stable (Figures 88, 89, 90).



Figure 88. View of the house looking northwest from Bridge Street, c.1882. This is one of only two photographs which show the full extent of the buildings comprising the rear kitchen ell. **A** indicates the one-story two-room kitchen ell; **B** indicates the one-story woodshed; **C** indicates a slightly taller, unpainted structure attached to the north end of the woodshed, likely a barn/stable. (Historic Northampton Archives.)

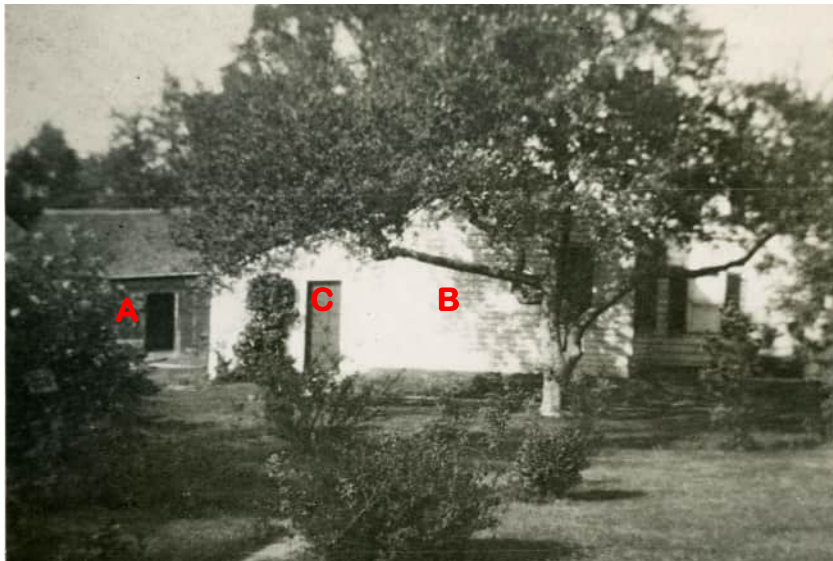


Figure 89. View of the Parsons house in 1893 looking east. In this view only the woodshed **A** is visible; the barn/stable appears to have been removed by this date. The one-story west wing **B** is in the foreground; a lean-to **C** is attached on the rear of the west wing. (Historic Northampton Archives.)

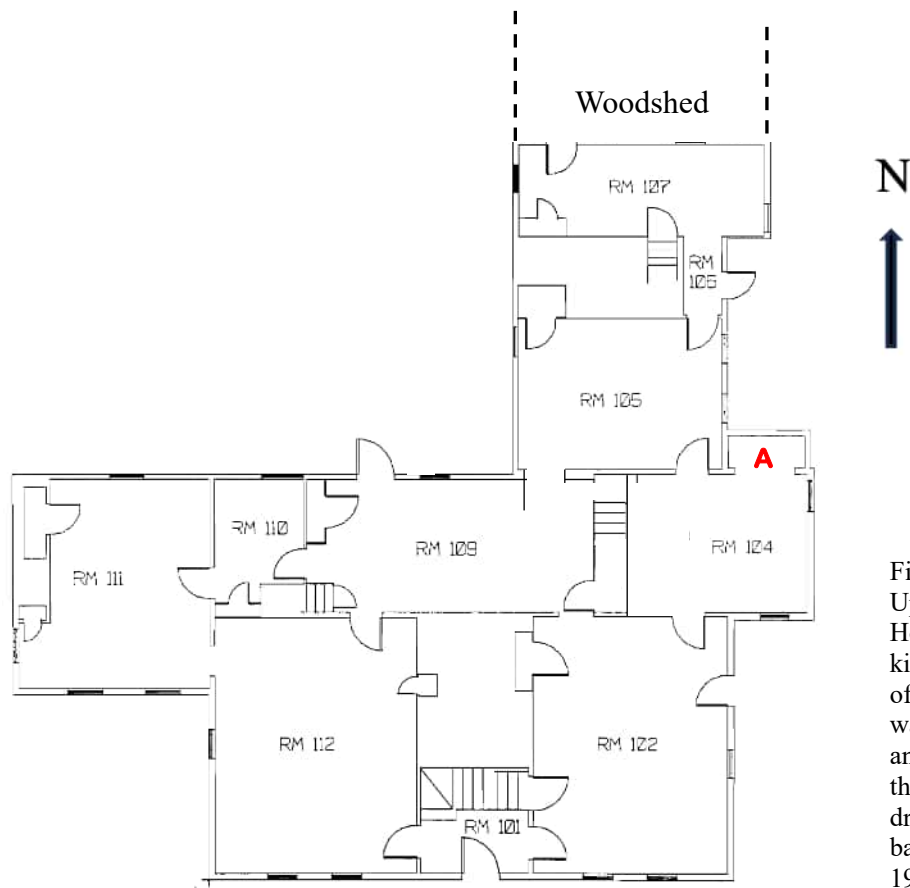
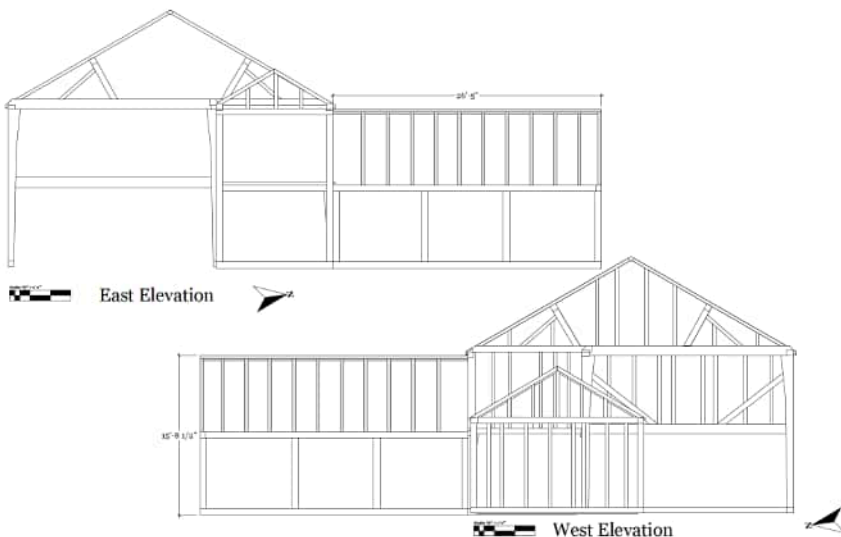


Figure 90.
Upper left - Plan of the Parsons House and the Phase 5 rear kitchen wing. Note the addition of the cupboard **A** on the north wall of Rm 104. The woodshed and barn/stable are not drawn as they did not exist when the drawing was executed. (Drawing based on Clancey and Leeke, 1992.)



Lower left – Framing diagram of the house and the Phase 5 rear kitchen ell. (Drawing by Nevan Carling.)

The construction of the rear kitchen wing was likely the last major remodeling project undertaken before the death of Ferdinand Hunt Wright in 1842. The primary kitchen activity was moved to Rm 105 in the rear ell, where a large cooking fireplace and bake oven were constructed opening into Rm 105 (Figure 91).



Figure 91. Two views of the rear ell kitchen fireplace in the north wall of Rm 107. The use of the fireplace **A** and bake oven **B** were discontinued during the second half of the 19th century when a cast iron cook stove was installed. The fireplace- and bake oven openings were likely sealed with bricks and mortar during the 20th century. Behind the doorway to the left of the fireplace is a small pantry with a pass-through opening in the north wall to Rm 107. (Photographs by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

This room was connected to the old kitchen (Rm 109) by a new doorway in the north wall of Rm 109. The old kitchen and the adjoining room (Rm 110) remained essentially unchanged, although their function at this time is unclear. The 1850 U. S. Census informs that the house was occupied by the Chloe Wright (age 86), the elderly widow of Daniel Wright, and her widowed daughter Fanny Wright (age 50), and a family of five who were boarders: merchant George Sargent (age 30) and his wife Lydia A. (age 27), their two daughters (1 and 2 years old); and a servant, Margaret (age 21). They likely occupied most of the house, and in all likelihood the two kitchens in the house – the old kitchen in Rm 109 and the new kitchen in the rear wing (Rm 105) - were both in use by the boarders and the Wrights.

An excavated cellar exists under Rms 105 and 107 with brick foundation walls. The chimney mass for the kitchen fireplace and bake oven rests on two brick piers which rise from the floor and are decked by large squared timbers, from which rises the brick mass of the chimney.

The function of Rm 107 located on the north side of the chimney mass is unclear, as 20th century remodeling of this room has obscured its original configuration and function. Undoubtedly it functioned as a workroom and intermediate space between the woodshed and the kitchen. A small pantry/cupboard with a pass-through opening above a counter is located between the two rooms in a small closet-like room along the west wall. It is unclear if it was original to the construction of the rear ell or a later improvement, though the latter is more likely.

Remains of a brick cistern just north of the existing kitchen wing structure suggests that there may have been a water pump in Rm 107 or in the woodshed connected to the cistern (Figure 92).



Figure 92.

View of the north wall of the rear kitchen ell, 2025. The one-story rear woodshed which was attached to the north end of the kitchen wing was removed in the late 19th or early 20th century. Later in the 20th century a small, one-room lean-to was built onto the north wall of the rear ell, covering the brick cistern. This lean-to, referred to as a “mud room”, was removed in 2016, and the existence of the former cistern was discovered. (Photograph by Myron O. Stachiw, 2024.)

The physical relationship of the built-in wall cupboard in the north wall of Rm 104 to the Phase 4 east wing and to the Phase 5 rear ell suggests that it was constructed after the rear ell was constructed. However, no building archaeology was undertaken on this structure, and no concrete statement of when and how it was constructed is currently possible.

The original framing of the rear ell is currently accessible only in the unfinished attic over Rms 105 and 107. The rafters are rounded softwood logs no larger than six inches in diameter. They are tenoned and pegged into mortises cut into the hewn five-sided ridgepole which runs the full length of the ell. Wall framing in the ell was not accessible. The framing of the floor under Rms

105 and 107 was replaced in 1975-76, new stairs to the cellar were constructed, and a concrete floor was poured in the cellar under Rms 105 and 107.

Modernization of the house occurred in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but with minor physical changes to the rooms and historic fabric.

Post 1850 Changes to the Parsons House

There is little documentation in the Historic Northampton (HN) archives recording the changes made to the property before it came under the ownership of the Northampton Historical Society in 1941. A very limited chronology based on Anne C. Bliss's diary entries about happenings at the house was assembled for the period 1911-1940.⁹⁵ Several historic photos of the exterior of the building dating to the 1880s and 1890s are the earliest visual records in the HN collections (see Figures 88, 89). These images show the woodshed and a barn/stable connected to the Phase 5 rear kitchen ell, and a one-story lean-to which was added to the rear of the house and west wing. The woodshed and barn were gone by the beginning of the 20th century. The rear one-story lean-to shed was replaced by a screened-in porch in the 1920s or 1930s; it remained in place until 2005. The images also show two generations of a front porch; the last version was removed in 1973.

Major periods of interior work occurred in 1953 when the Northampton Historical Society undertook replastering, painting, and wallpapering in Rm 102, and their first attempt at "restoration" in Rm 109 where late 19th and 20th century surfaces were removed to reveal exposed ceiling joists, paint was stripped, and removal of boards over the fireplace and bake oven revealed the second bake oven which had faced into Rm 102. (Figure 93).

In 1970 the parlor (Rm 112) was "restored" to what was believed to be the 1780 period. In 1973 window sash with two panes each were replaced with new sash with multiple small panes on the front elevation and west wing, and the front porch was removed, returning at least the front elevation of the building to what was believed to be a late 18th century appearance.

⁹⁵ These entries about the Parsons house between 1911 and 1940 are in the archival collections of Historic Northampton under the following citations: A.V. Bliss (B2F5:A.Md.12.29-37). These entries can be viewed in Appendix 7 - "Historic Northampton Nathaniel Parsons House Maintenance/Repairs Record" along with chronologically-organized entries of maintenance and repair activities through 2019.

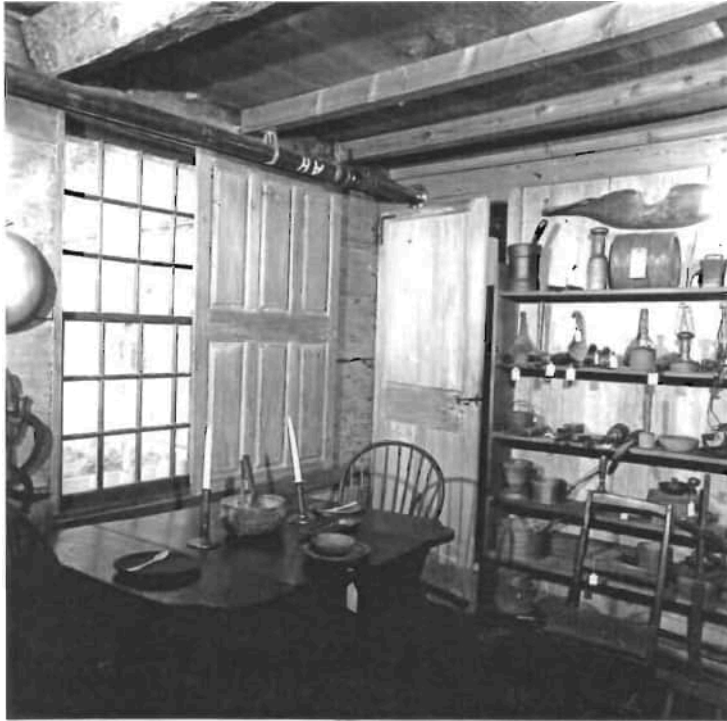


Figure 93.

Two views of the rear lean-to kitchen (Rm 109) after the 1953 "restoration".

Top – Looking northwest at the rear staircase which was relocated to this location in the early 20th century. The "restoration" involved removal of the beadboard ceiling and the earlier lath and plaster ceiling above it, removing paint and whitewash, and inserting new joists in the ceiling where necessary. This relocated staircase was removed in 1981 and a new staircase was erected about six feet to the east in the location of the original Phase 3 staircase.

Bottom – View towards the southeast corner of Rm 109 showing the rear lean-to kitchen fireplace and bake oven. The mantelpiece and the boards above it were part of the 1953 "restoration".

(Photographs from Clancey and Leeke, 1992.)



Many mechanical and interior- and structural work projects and improvements were carried out in the mid 1970s. In 1981 a major project involving the excavation of a new cellar beneath the east half of the house was undertaken. This also included considerable structural work to the framing and flooring beneath the east half of the house, as well as more “restoration” work in Rm 102 and in Rm 109. In Rm 102 the former doorway and staircase to the west cellar, eliminated during Phase 4 in the early 19th century, were recreated. (see Figures 79, 80.) In Rm 109, an early 20th century bathroom was removed and the rear staircase to the second floor, which was moved several meters to the west when the bathroom was first created, was reconstructed more or less in its original location.

This work in Rm 109 and the rooms above was carried out in preparation of creating an apartment for resident caretakers. This also included creating a new bathroom (Rm 206) in the caretakers’ apartment on the second floor, as well as a new kitchen for the caretakers in Rm 107 in the rear ell. Over the next two years additional improvements and cosmetic repairs were carried out in the museum rooms on both the ground floor and second floor (Rms 101, 102, 112, 201, 202, 210).

1992 saw the first comprehensive study of the physical history of the Parsons House undertaken by architectural historians and paint conservators from the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) Conservation Center

.

In 2015 the last major construction/structural repair project was undertaken under the rear ground floor rooms. A new basement and bulkhead were created under the rear pile of the house, rotted structural members were replaced or repaired. In 2016 the small lean-to off the north end of the rear kitchen ell was removed.

Recommendations

Repairs/restoration

The investigation of the past two years has identified a number of repair and restoration priorities for the Parsons House. While a number of these are in large part dependent on the choices made by Historic Northampton regarding future interpretation of the house, others are not. Structural engineer Elizabeth Acly of Cirrus Structural Engineering has identified both immediate- and long-term repairs which will need to be undertaken to ensure that the building remains on solid footing structurally and environmentally (see Appendix 8). Following are recommendations for repairs compiled by Myron O. Stachiw:

Structural

- South elevation sills, foundation, and wall framing at sill level - Rms 101, 102, 112
 - Some of the post and stud bottoms are rotted
 - Foundation under the sill needs inspection, repair/replacement as necessary (see Cirrus Structural Engineering report for discussion and recommendations)

West Parlor – Rm 112

- Floor framing under west parlor (Rm 112) repair/strengthening
 - Existing floor framing is not the original framing. Repair/replacement was done in 20th century.
 - Joists are not supported in butt-cog mortises, but by ledger boards nailed to the girts (see Cirrus Structural Engineering report for discussion and recommendations)
- Flooring/framing along east wall of west parlor (Rm 112) between firebox/hearth and doorway to entry lobby
 - The flooring slopes down to the east along this wall.
 - It is unclear why this is happening (see Cirrus Structural Engineering report for discussion and recommendations)

Former kitchen in rear kitchen ell – Room 105 (Figure 91)

- Un-brick kitchen fireplace and bake oven in rear kitchen ell (Rm 105)
 - Presently the firebox and oven mouth are bricked-in.
 - Remove brick filling in the firebox mouth and oven opening
 - Clean up and restore brickwork in firebox and bake oven mouth
 - Install damper or secure opening in top of chimney
 - Opening of the firebox and oven will allow interpretation of this space as the c.1830s kitchen modernization:
 - Removal of the kitchen from the main house to a new kitchen ell which contained two rooms – kitchen room with firebox and oven, and a work room/pantry which had access to water in the form of a brick cistern just outside the north wall. Likely there was a sink in this room which drained through the wall to the outdoors. The workroom was connected to a 1½

to 2-story timber framed building which likely functioned as a wood shed and stable/wagon shed.

- **Open former doorway between Rm 105 and 109**
 - This was a doorway between the middle room in the rear pile of the house (Rm 109) and the new kitchen. It was closed off in the 20th century when a bathroom was constructed against the present north and east walls of Rm 109.
- **Remove remnants of the early 20th c bathroom plumbing remaining in the northeast corner of Rm 109.**
 - When the bathroom was constructed in this location the enclosed staircase from Rm 109 to the second floor which rose from north to south along the east wall was removed and a new staircase was constructed about 6 feet to the west, also rising from north to south. To illustrate the former location of the doorway to the staircase, a false door can be created in the east wall, as the present staircase to the second floor is accessed from Rm 104, but this staircase essentially occupies the same space as the original staircase. The present staircase was created in the 1980s to accommodate access from the kitchen ell to the second-floor spaces occupied by the Parsons House caretaker.
 - Replace modern repairs to the ceiling in the former bathroom location. Recreate original joists.

Rm 102 – Former Hall/Dining Room

- Remove section of current lath and plaster on the ceiling above the north wall
 - Creating a viewport in the ceiling above the north wall by removing some lath and plaster will reveal the extensive soot staining which occurred on the joists and floorboards overhead from nearly 100 years of exposure to smoke and soot during the period that the room served as a kitchen.
- **Recreate 3 sliding window shutters in Rm 102**
 - The federal period improvements in Rm 102 included the installation of internal sliding window shutters in this room - one on the window in the east wall and two on the windows in the south wall. The shutters slid in channels cut into the top of the chair rails. It is likely that these shutters accompanied the installation of the present large windows in this room during Phase 2.
- **Open fireboxes in Rms 102 (former hall/dining room), 112 (west parlor), 210 (parlor chamber)**
 - Repair /stabilize brickwork in fireboxes and in throat above fireboxes
 - Install dampers or other means of closing-off flues
 - Revealing the fireboxes will allow deeper interpretation of the use of these rooms, changes to firebox size in Rm 102 when it no longer functioned as a kitchen fireplace

- **Make visually accessible the no-longer-used and partially dismantled brick bake oven located behind the cupboard in the west wall of this room (Rm 102).**
 - This may require hinging the back wall or installing a plexiglass panel behind the shelving in the cupboard to reveal the bake oven.
 - This bake oven was created in the early 19th century as part of the early Federal period changes made by the Wright family to accommodate two families/households consisting of the elder Wrights (Daniel and Chloe) and son Ferdinand Hunt Wright and his wife and children. At this time the entire chimney was rebuilt with 4 fireplaces, and 2 bake ovens. The bake oven facing into Rm 102 was partially dismantled and the present west wall of Rm 102 was altered during Phase 4, with the firebox reduced in size and the present mantelpiece installed.
- **Make visually accessible the remains of the early federal period paneled chimney breast wall on the west wall of Rm 102.**
 - While only a few of the stiles and rails of the paneled chimney breast wall remain *in situ*, making them accessible would reveal this new discovery of the paneled chimney breast wall. This could be complemented with color drawings of the intact paneling in two paint-color phases present during the first phase of federal period remodeling.
 - Access can be provided in several ways:
 - Rebuild the wall to allow a section to swing out, revealing the surviving paneling elements, or:
 - Generate a digital model reconstructing the appearance of the paneled wall over the two phases of painted finishes which could be presented on a computer tablet – or accessed through a cell phone by scanning a QR code.
 - Panels with QR codes leading to images and text can be a useful interpretive vehicle. Several layers of information can be created, allowing the visitor to access deeper information/images if desired.

Rm 112 – West Parlor

- Rm 112 – West Parlor – hinge existing mantelpiece (second federal period remodeling) to reveal the scar/form of the first Federal Period remodeling mantelpiece
- Rm 112 – West parlor – west wall – stabilize the revealed portion of the wall showing earlier plaster, brick nogging, lath, scar for bank of casement windows
 - This will require removing a section of wainscoting, stabilizing the wall elements, shielding with plexiglass.
 - Drawings, QR code links to drawings, or hand -held computer tablets can help to explain and visualize the earlier finishes as revealed in the west wall.
- Rm 112 – remove baseboard heating system if possible. This will allow access to the surviving Phase 1 wall features for further investigation.

Rm 209 – Northwest chamber

- Rm 209 – Northwest chamber – west wall
 - Close-in former window opening in the west wall – replaster wall
 - Illustrate on the west wall the original slope of the full rear saltbox-like roof line and a drawing of the form and framing of this lean-to.
 - Illustrate on the west wall the location and size of the window in this wall after the rear pile was raised to two-full stories.
- Rm 209 – south wall
 - Retain (or enlarge) the current viewport in the south wall where the plaster and lath were removed to reveal the heavily weathered and unpainted Phase 1 exterior sheathing.

Rm 206 – Former Bathroom

- Rm 206 – Remove wall between Rms 206 and 208
 - Restore room to original c.1816 form by removing the wall erected to create the bathroom (Rm 206). Unclear if this bathroom was created in the early 20th c. at the same time as the bathroom in Rm 109, or in the 1980s for the caretaker's apartment.
 - Define the former location of this wall with marking on the floor

Rm 208

- Interpret the patch in the floor for the early 20th century location of the staircase from Rm 109 below

Who can do this work?

The various tasks described above will require the services of a craftsmen of several types.

- A mason familiar with and sensitive to historic brickwork related to fireplaces and chimneys will be necessary to reveal and properly stabilize/restore the fireboxes and any damage that exists to the lower ends of the chimney flues above the fireboxes.
- A skilled restoration carpenter/cabinetmaker will be needed to carry out removal of any existing fabric, and to fabricate and install any new materials which will be required for desired access to materials and features not currently accessible.
- As some work that might be undertaken could be in areas where historic fabric was not removed during the 1992-3 SPNEA investigation or during the current HSR project, an architectural historian/archaeologist should be available to view any newly revealed fabric/features to document and interpret these features.
- All work which removes existing fabric should be thoroughly documented with written notes and photographs before, during, and after work is undertaken.

Interpretation

This historic structure report clearly indicates that most of the significant changes made to the house and most surviving features date to the first several decades of the 19th century. While the overall form of the 1719 house is clearly recognizable, the features which defined its early appearance are largely covered by existing plastered walls and ceilings (evidence for casement windows, interior wall sheathing in Rm 102, heavily-sooted ceiling framing in Rm 102) and beam casings (chamfered summer beams).

These areas and features can be made accessible through a number of different strategies:

- Physical
 - viewports which can be opened and closed as needed can be created, or viewports permanently opened with plexiglass shields (for example, in ceilings)
 - Photographs and/or drawings showing earlier features in a wall, floor, or ceiling
- Digital
 - Create digital reconstructions/images of earlier building elements (casement windows, cupboards, chimney breast walls) which can be accessed on tablets given to visitors or a guide, or which can be activated by cell phones scanning QR codes. Telephone applications now exists and are used by some museums and historic landmarks where a visitor points the phone at a wall or structure and it links to an illustrated reconstruction or historic photograph of what the wall or structure looked like before it was altered.
 - The same strategy can be used to illustrate changing paint colors in rooms over time. Depending on the degree to which this is to be illustrated – in 2 dimensions or three dimensions – 3D laser scanning of specific rooms might be necessary.

The physical and historic evidence of the evolution of the house and the fortunes of its occupants can and should be tied to historic international, national, regional, and local developments. For example, the impact of the economic difficulties endured by New England residents in the decades leading up to, during, and after the Revolutionary War for independence, is clearly reflected in the trajectories of the families which owned and occupied the property in the 18th- and 19th centuries.

The reconstruction of the house in the early 19th century and its modest improvements in the Federal Period style clearly occurred within a larger national trend, but also in a very local transformation in Northampton and in the immediate neighborhood, as illustrated by the two other historic houses owned by Historic Northampton - the 1796 Shepherd House and the 1813 Isaac Damon House. A popular Massachusetts architect, Isaac Damon came to Northampton, MA, from Weymouth in 1811 to work on the First Church of Christ, constructed from plans supplied by Asher Benjamin. This launched a successful career in the Connecticut River Valley. He built at least 13 churches, 14 other buildings, and 25 bridges. Most of his buildings were constructed in the Connecticut River Valley, but his bridge work took him to upstate New York and even to Lexington, KY. Launching new research and programming based on the Federal Period transformation of the immediate neighborhood of the Parsons House and Northampton and the region in general would be a way to imbed the experience of the Parsons House owners/occupants in a larger context.

Creating static exhibitions and interpretations in historic building museums is no longer a successful strategy for reaching a wide public and justifying the expenses involved in creating and maintaining a historic house museum. Interpretation and public programming must be creative and ever-changing; this requires a considerable commitment to supporting creative and ongoing research and public programming.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Results of Paint Investigation

- A. Christine Thomson, Decorative Arts Conservation, Salem, MA
Notes and stratigraphic charts from investigations at the
Parsons House, 2024-2026
- B. Kirsten Travers Moffit, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation,
Williamsburg, VA
Paint Pigments Report, Sample from Rm 112, 2024.

Appendix 2 – Selected Entries, U.S. Direct Tax of 1798 for Northampton, MA. Compiled by Myron O. Stachiw, 2025.

Appendix 3 - Architectural Drawings of the Parsons House

- A. Framing drawings by Phases, Nevan Carling, 2025-26
- B. Nancy Rexford Drawings, 1st- and 2nd floor framing, 1979
- C. Bill Holloway Drawings, Floor plans, 2020
- D. Architects, Inc. Drawings, Floor plans, c.2014

Appendix 4 - Nevan Carling, “Placing the Parsons House: The Cultural and Ecological Context for Constructing a Connecticut River Valley House”, 2026

Appendix 5 - William A. Flynt, “A Dendrochronology Study of Select Framing Timbers from the Nathaniel Parsons House, Northampton, MA”, 2024

Appendix 6 - C14 Dating Report of grasses in Rm 112 plaster Beta Analytic Laboratory, Miami, Florida, 2025

Appendix 7 - Historic Northampton Nathaniel Parsons House Maintenance/Repairs Record, 1911 – 2019

Appendix 8 - Structural Engineering Report, Elizabeth Acly, Cirrus Structural Engineering, Columbia, CT, 2026