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NOTES ON THE CLOUGH TAVERN, CANTERBURY, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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These notes are an abbreviated record of a brief visit made to the Clough Tavern on November 7, 1997. Also present at the visit were Christine Fonda of the NHDHR; Michael Duffy, who was employed in repairing the plaster and painting the central stairhall; and Mr. and Mrs. Andrew A. Scanlon, the owners of the property.

Lyford's *History of the Town of Canterbury* states that the main house was built about 1778, and that the wing that is connected to the southeast corner is the original Clough house, said to be the oldest surviving dwelling in town. The Scanlons recalled that the wing is thought to date from about 1740. The interior of the wing was reconfigured as a summer kitchen for the main house, probably in the 1840s or 1850s.

The Clough mansion is a large, rectangular, three-story dwelling with a gable roof, two chimneys, and a central hallway. In general size and form, the building is reminiscent of the William Pitt Tavern in Portsmouth. The tavern is most unusual for its ambitious scale, especially within the context of the upper Merrimack River valley where three-story houses are rare. Lyford's history notes that the building was licensed as a tavern. Lyford also notes that tavern license records were kept only sporadically in Canterbury, providing only vague information on the duration of tavern-keeping in any given building.

Frame: The house is massively framed. Its three-story frame is unusual in the upper Merrimack Valley, especially since the two-room depth of the frame calls for two prick posts in each bent of the frame. Thus, the outer end walls of the house each have two prick posts, as do the two hallway walls. These posts project into each room at each end of the fireplace walls, and are cased. They appear as deep projections adjacent to each fireplace wall.

The posts of the end walls and hallway walls are exposed to view in the third story, which for the most part was never finished with lath and plaster. Here, the posts can be identified as oak, as can the sawn diagonal braces that link posts and plates or girts. A number of the framing joints are exposed to view in the third story, and each joint is marked by a set of scribed numerals, fully revealed to view as in a meeting house attic.

The attic of the house is floored with a single thickness of boards. Due to the fact that the third story also served as an unfinished attic, the true attic floor served more as a scaffolding than as a completely finished area, and there are several holes and voids in the attic flooring, offering glimpses down into the third story. The roof frame of the house is a rafter-and-purlin system, and the broad area of the roof apparently induced the carpenter to insert an unusual number of diagonal wind braces connecting the rafters and purlins. There is a fairly large area of new roof sheathing in the center or hallway bay on the front (west) slope of the roof, suggesting that this portion of the roof may have deteriorated from old leaks.

The Clough House has a “double-silled” frame of a type seen occasionally in the area around Canterbury, Northwood, and Pittsfield. The outer walls of the house are supported on sills that rest on split granite underpinning which, in turn, probably rests on footing stones set into a builder’s trench around the perimeter of the building. The cellar is excavated about four feet inside this perimeter foundation. The cellar walls are carefully built with flat-faced fieldstones up to the height of the first floor, where they support a second, inner sill. As seen through a few window openings provided in both the outer underpinning and the inner cellar walls for ventilation of the cellar, the outer and inner sills are connected by short, three- or four-foot joists. The inner sills support the floor girders and the common joists that support the greater part of the first floor of the house.

We do not presently know the geographical extent of the use of the “double-silled” frame, nor its purpose. Such a frame does offer a double buffer against the penetration of cold air into the cellar, and may have been thought to keep a house warmer in wintertime than a house with its cellar walls at the periphery of the house. Such frames occur on very small and modest houses as well as on ambitious dwellings like the Clough House, so the practice does not appear to be linked with the size or cost of the frame.

It should be noted that the split granite underpinning of the house is unlikely to date from the original construction of the building. The splitting and hammering of granite was largely unknown in the Concord area until the 1780s, and did not become at all commonplace until after 1800. The true beginning of the granite business as a local industry in the Concord area occurred with the building of the granite state prison in 1810; thereafter, inmates of the prison were employed in splitting and hammering granite for commercial sale. Private quarries eventually opened to supplement the prison’s output.

It therefore appears that the underpinning and hammered stone steps seen around the house must be a replacement for earlier foundation materials. Possibly this new stonework was added when the house was modernized around 1830 (see below).

Original woodwork: Most of the interior woodwork of the house reflects the Revolutionary-era construction date of the house. There is, however, clear evidence of the remodeling of certain rooms or areas of the house in the periods around 1830, 1850, and the twentieth century.

The original period of construction is reflected in the raised panels of most interior doors and in the wide muntins of transom sashes that have been preserved in place in the house and in storage in the basement. There is also a limited amount of fixed paneling, also of the raised-panel pattern. The most visible area of fixed paneling is in the triangular arrangement of panels beneath the front staircase on the first story. The older doors are six-paneled, with the small panels at the middle.

The earliest muntins, seen only in a few transom sashes but not surviving in any window sashes, have the typical wide Georgian ovolo-and-fillet profile.

First remodeling, circa 1830: The first remodeling of the house appears to have included complete replacement of all window sashes, replacement of the original front doorway, and some remodeling in the stairhall.

All of the windows of the house are filled with ovolo-and-fillet muntins of the narrower federal-style profile, probably measuring $5/8$ or $3/4$ inch in width. This wholesale re-sashing of the house seems to coincide with the first major remodeling of the building. There are a few window sashes of the wide Georgian pattern in the wing or old house. We did not examine these, but Mrs. Scanlon thought that they are modern reproductions.

On the exterior, this remodeling is reflected in the front doorway, which is a heavy Tuscan frontispiece that expresses a transition between the late federal style and the incoming Greek Revival style. The muntin profile of the sidelights and the transom sash of this doorway matches the muntin profile of all the window sashes seen in the house. The sidelights of the doorway are rather unusual in having movable lower sashes.

These facts suggest that the Clough House was provided with new sashes and a new front doorway about the year 1830. Because the new doorway would have changed the character of the stairhall, the door casings facing into that space were also modernized during the same remodeling. The door casings or architraves that face into the stairhall are composed of two wide, flat fillets, with a backband composed of two narrow, flat fillets. As seen in other dated houses in the Concord area, this style of casing appeared about 1830, and was sometimes used in conjunction with older, federal-style casings in less stylish rooms in the same building. The flat casing was commonly used with narrow, federal-style window muntins, as seen throughout the Clough House.

Although the rear (eastern) rooms on the first story of the Clough House also display flat filleted casings, these can be recognized as machine-planed modern reproductions. It appears that a former owner of the house restored the door casings in these rooms; Mrs. Scanlon recalled hearing that the rooms had once been remodeled with large openings leading into the rear hallway. Perhaps not recognizing that the flat casings dated from about 1830 instead of 1778, the earlier owner reproduced these casings for the restored doorways to the rear rooms instead of older casings that can be seen around some of the windows in the front of the house.

The staircase does not appear to have been modernized when the new front doorway and interior door casings were added. As seen from beneath, the risers and treads appear to be nailed with hand-forged nails, which in the Concord area denote a date before 1810 or so.

The turned balusters, though not easily datable by comparison with others in the vicinity, could date from the eighteenth century. By 1830, the predominant style of baluster in the region was a simple square or rectangular stick, so the balusters are clearly older than other 1830-period changes that are seen in the house. The balusters are unusual in having the tenons at their feet placed at the back of the base rather than at its center.

The handrail has an applied cap and applied side mouldings. This profile is comparable to (though simpler than) the fashion seen in the New Hampshire seacoast throughout much of the eighteenth century. By 1830, a slimmer or simpler federal-style profile had superseded the older moulded style of handrail in the region. For these reasons, it appears that the entire balustrade dates from the original period of the main house rather than from the remodeling of about 1830.

The parlor to the right of the front doorway, in the southwestern corner of the house, is notable for a fine, federal-style mantelpiece. The fireplace opening is surrounded by a “double” architrave having a backband composed of a Grecian ogee and bead—a typical federal-period profile; the transition between the two fillets of the architrave is marked by a smaller Grecian ogee. Above the top corners of the architrave are two flat rectangular blocks that mark the outer edges of the frieze. Above the frieze is a deeply-projecting mantelshelf with a cavetto-and-bead bed moulding and a rounded edge supported by a smaller cavetto.

This mantelshelf is of a federal-period type that began to appear shortly before 1800 and achieved its greatest popularity in the early years of the nineteenth century. Its use in the Concord area continued at least until 1830. As noted above, federal-style features like this mantelpiece often occur in newly-built Concord-area houses of about 1830, together with early Greek Revival features, although the late federal and early Greek Revival details are usually segregated from one another in separate rooms.

For these reasons, it is possible that this front parlor was remodeled in the federal style at the same time that the more progressive Greek Revival features were added in the

stairhall area. As noted above, the period around 1830 seems to be the time when many features of the house, including its window sashes, were modernized.

The southwest parlor has four staples set into its plastered ceiling near its southwest corner. These staples appear to have supported a tester or curtains for a bedstead that was placed in this part of the room. The fact that the tester was supported from the ceiling suggests that the bedstead had no posts. This, in turn, suggests that the bedstead could have been a folding type. Part or all of a folding bedstead remains in the attic of the house. Another room at the back of the house has similar staples set into its ceiling, apparently indicating the location of another folding bedstead.

The southwest parlor of the house can be entered directly from a one-story side “porch” or entry that projects from the south wall of the house. This suggests that the southwest room could have been remodeled for use as a ladies’ parlor, not uncommon in the larger or better-appointed taverns of the early nineteenth century.

The northeast room on the first story has now had its ceiling plaster and some architectural features removed. It is clear that this room was one of two kitchens in the main house. Its fireplace is a large cooking hearth, and there is a brick oven to the right of the fireplace.

Second remodeling, circa 1848: It is also clear that this room was modernized around 1840 or 1850. The doorway leading to the front stairhall retains a pitched pediment which is characteristic of the mature Greek Revival style. Paint profiles at the sides of the two closet doors flanking the fireplace wall show that these two doors once had similar pediments.

Cuts in the hearth reveal that the fireplace was once fitted with a cast iron fire frame—a heating device similar to a Franklin stove but without an iron base or back. Such frames were common in the 1830s and 1840s, and often had Greek Revival-style ornamentation cast into their fronts.

Installation of the fire frame would have necessitated the closing up of most of the cooking fireplace, and the building of a new brick back wall for the fire frame, close to the front of the fireplace opening. The slots cut into the hearth reveal that the fire frame was installed at the extreme right-hand edge of the fireplace, perhaps to center the frame in the wall of the room. It is possible that the old cooking fireplace and oven were hidden behind a plastered wall built in front of the older brickwork. Above the fireplace is the plastered back wall of a small closet that once undoubtedly had a hinged door that was removed when some of the wall and ceiling plaster in the room was taken down.

As noted above, the remodeling of this room in the mature Greek Revival style appears to date from the 1840-50 period. The name “J. Clough, 1848” is marked or chalked on the plaster of the former fireplace closet, and this appears to identify the family member who modernized the room and the exact year of the remodeling..

There is no clear sign that other rooms in the house were remodeled in the late Greek Revival style. This suggests that the northwest room was remodeled for some special use—perhaps as an up-to-date parlor or as an office. Perhaps research into the career of J. Clough will suggest the reason why this room was modernized independently of other areas of the building.

Removal of the plastered ceiling of this room has revealed the joists of the floor above. Some of these joists are rectangular in cross-section; others are waney-edged. There is no obvious explanation of why some joists are cruder than others, but the laths for the ceiling plaster was evidently nailed only to those joists that have squared bottoms unless boards were nailed to the edges of all joists to serve as furring strips for the lath.

The southeast room at the rear of the house, adjacent to the door leading to the rear wing, was originally a second kitchen. Like the northwest kitchen, this second kitchen had a large cooking fireplace with a brick oven to its right. As in the front kitchen, this fireplace was later partially bricked up and fitted with a cast iron fire frame. This fire frame, like that in the front kitchen, has been removed and the cooking fireplace has been opened up to its original dimensions.

These two fire frames were probably installed during the remodeling that changed the front kitchen into a Greek Revival parlor or office in 1848. This suggests that most cooking operations were moved out of the main house at this period, and perhaps that the house ceased to be used as a tavern at this time. After the insertion of fire frames in the two cooking fireplaces in the main house, most cooking was presumably done in the summer kitchen in the wing.

We did not examine the cooking arrangements in the summer kitchen in any detail. The kitchen is dominated by a massive chimney which has a fireplace and a built-in cauldron or set kettle for heating water. This cauldron is unusual in having a cast iron top which supports the kettle. This top has a scalloped border that extends over the upper edge of the brickwork of the arch or base for the kettle. The Canterbury Shakers installed similar cauldrons in the 1840s for boiling syrup in their syrup shop. The fire door for this cauldron is of a pattern that is thought to have been cast by the Ford Foundry in Concord, which also manufactured cast iron stoves for the Shakers.

Twentieth-century remodelings: The Clough house was partially restored in the twentieth century. The installation of flat filleted door casings in the back rooms of the first story has been noted above. Restoration of the doors leading from the rear stairhall to these rooms was presumably necessitated by a former widening of these doors into broader openings.

The remodelings of the twentieth century also included the addition of crown mouldings as cornices in most rooms. These crown mouldings have the double ogee profile common in eighteenth-century work. We did not examine the house carefully enough to determine whether any room originally had such a cornice. All the cornices that we did examine proved to be machine-planed, and hence of modern date.

It appears that the windows in the Clough House originally had no top casings; the side casings were simply stopped against the ceiling plaster. Because the rooms of the house were not designed for crown mouldings, the bottoms of the added mouldings project below the tops of the window openings. The mouldings are therefore broken out around the windows to serve as valances for window curtains, an attractive detail but one that is not seen in old houses.

An additional twentieth-century change that we noticed was the addition of a machine-planed bolection moulding around the fireplace opening in the northeast room on the first story. Because of changes that had occurred to the left of the fireplace (the addition of a bathroom?), the original fireplace trim and the paneling to the left side of the chimney had been disturbed or removed. This necessitated the addition of new work in this area.

The source of the profile for the bolection moulding appears to have been an original bolection in the second-floor bedchamber at the southeast corner of the house. This same room includes an original transom sash above a closet door, placed so as to throw some light into the closet or passageway to the north of its fireplace.

Mrs. Scanlon told us that the house had been repaired some years ago by Philip Baker of Antrim, whose crews did a great deal of restoration throughout northern New England in the 1950s and 1960s. As far as Mrs. Scanlon knew, however, Mr. Baker's work was restricted to sill replacement and other structural jobs, and did not include the restoration of interior features.