



NEW HAMPSHIRE DIVISION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

State of New Hampshire, Department of Cultural Resources

19 Pillsbury Street, 2nd floor, Concord NH 03301-3570

Voice/ TDD ACCESS: RELAY NH 1-800-735-2964

<http://www.nh.gov/nhdhr>

603-271-3483

603-271-3558

FAX 603-271-3433

preservation@nhdhr.state.nh.us

REPORT ON THE CARRIAGE HOUSE AND GARAGE WENTWORTH-COOLIDGE MANSION Portsmouth, New Hampshire

James L. Garvin
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This report is based on a brief inspection of the barn/carriage house/garage/chauffeur's quarters at the Wentworth-Coolidge Mansion, made on April 8, 1994. The purpose of the inspection was to ascertain the age of the various components of the structure and to learn whether the complex contains elements of architectural significance that should be given special consideration during possible conversion of the buildings to a visitors' center for the historic site.

Summary: The central, gable-roofed barn appears to date from about 1890. The wings on each side of the central barn appear to date from about 1920. There is no evidence of earlier work in any portion of the complex, and adaptation for a visitors' center can therefore proceed as long as the usual respect is shown for structures that contribute to the historical story of the property.

Description and history: The central barn of the complex is a wood-framed structure measuring about 34 feet wide by 41 feet long. It is covered by a gable roof that is slightly asymmetrical; the slope to the northeast of the ridge is longer, and rests on a lower wall plate, than the roof slope on the southwest of the ridge. The walls of the barn are framed with a few major posts at the corners and certain intermediate points, and with smaller 2" by 4" studs. Two ranges of posts run longitudinally through the building to support purlins that lie beneath the rafters at about one-third of the distance from the ridge to the eaves. The rafters are circular-sawn 2" by 8"s, 20 to 21 inches on centers. The posts and purlins are circular sawn. The roof sheathing and the flooring of the second-story loft at the rear two-thirds of the barn are machine-planed.

The floor of the loft at the rear two thirds of the barn is framed with two-inch scantling. The joists run from side to side. At the northeast side wall of the structure, the ends of the joists rest on the wall plates; at the southwest side wall, the ends rest on ribbands set well below the wall plates, which are higher than those on the opposite side of the building.

By contrast, the frames of the L-shaped wings that extend from the two sides of the central barn have scantling that is band-sawn. The rafters of the side wings are nominal 2" by 8"s, placed 18 inches on centers. Their feet rest on wall plates made of two band-sawn 2" by 6"s.

The interior finish of the chauffeur's apartment at the eastern end of the northeast wing is typical of the early twentieth century. The doors are five-cross-panel varnished southern yellow pine, and the casings are flat, with top casings resting on side casings. Door hinges and latches are plated with a mottled or antiqued finish. The window sashes throughout these newer wings are mostly six-over-six, and have muntins of an ogee-and-fillet "colonial" profile. The same is true of most of the sashes in the older barn, which were clearly modernized when the wings were added. A single older sash, with narrow, knife-edged ogee muntins, remains in a window opening next to a door that passes from the older barn to the shed attached to its northeast wall. This sash is characteristic of the late nineteenth century, and undoubtedly represents the sashes originally used throughout the older barn.

The walls of the chauffeur's apartment are neatly plastered and calcimined. There is evidence of a former plastered room in the southwest corner of the older barn, but this was not examined closely enough to learn whether it predates or is contemporary with the plastering of the chauffeur's apartment.

The exterior of the entire complex is covered with unstained red cedar shingles, many of which have darkened through exposure to the weather. Exterior door and window trim is flat-edged, and is painted white. Where visible, foundations are of mortared fieldstone or broken ledge stone.

According to members of the Coolidge family, the central barn originally stood close to the main house and was eventually moved to its present site and enlarged by the addition of the existing wings. A second cottage, with center chimney and roof dormers but with clapboarded walls, was once attached to the end of the L-shaped wing southwest of the central barn; this was removed from the site.

Other changes have occurred to the complex since it was photographed and described for a report entitled *State Coastal Properties Project: Part V Wentworth-Coolidge Property*, written in 1983 by The Thoresen Group. This report describes and pictures large, multi-light transom sashes above the central doors of the main barn, a line of dovecote openings above the transom sashes, a semicircular gable window below the ridge, and a small mast with a copper weathervane at the front peak of the roof. The report also describes features now missing from the roof of the barn in the area facing the Hall House to the north: "[T]he gabled west end of the north wing, near the shed, has matched-board doors above, with a 6/6 sash window below. On the rear slope of the main (north-south) roof, above the front of the shed, is a cupola with a hip roof and louvered sides. Oddly positioned, these features suggest that hens or chickens might have been kept here, or possibly hay."

Examination of early photographs, mostly from the collections of the Society for the Protection of New England Antiquities (SPNEA) in Boston, suggest the evolution of the barn, carriage house and garage complex.

Several of these photographs reveal that when J. Templeman Coolidge purchased the property in 1885, another barn stood near the kitchen wing of the old house. Several photographs dated 1883 (taken by Emma Coleman) and 1886 (probably taken by the Davis Brothers of Portsmouth) show this older barn to have stood with its ridge parallel to that of the kitchen wing. None of

these early Coolidge-era pictures is adequately detailed to show details of the older barn, but it may be presumed that it was an old structure, very possibly dating from the eighteenth century.

Other photographs taken between about 1890 and about 1916-18 show another barn on the same location. This newer structure is oriented with its ridge at right angles to that of the kitchen wing of the house, or with the same orientation as the ridge of the central barn in the complex on the hillside west of the house. At first detached from the house, this new barn was briefly connected to the “porch” or gable-roofed entry off the kitchen by a covered walkway.

Certain of these photographs provide evidence of the appearance of the new barn. One, stamped by the Halliday Historic Photograph Company and donated to SPNEA by J. Templeman Coolidge in 1916, shows the front (southeast) and one side (southwest) of the barn fully, except where obscured by a small tree off its rear corner. The gable of the barn then had a six-over-six window at its center; near the right-hand corner of the first story was a narrow door. The side of the barn had a window and narrow door opening into its southeast corner, and a scuttle (probably glazed) in the roof above this corner. Toward the rear of this side elevation was a wide sliding door, apparently with a hinged door inserted within it. Another photograph, reproduced as a post card, shows that the window next to the door in the side of the barn had an opening below it—possibly an entrance for fowl or other animals. The same photograph seems to show a wooden ramp leading up to the adjacent door.

It should be noted that the proportions of the barn shown in these photographs do not seem to match those of the barn in the center of the present complex. The barn in the photographs appears longer in relationship to its width, or narrower in relationship to its length, than the present structure. Yet the sawing technology of the frame of the surviving barn clearly differentiates it in date from the wings on either side of it, and it is almost certainly older than the wings. Perhaps only a portion of the old barn was moved to the new location on the hillside, perhaps the frame was widened after the move, or perhaps the historic photographs distort the proportions of the barn as it stood next to the house.

In any case, no portion of the barn/carriage house/garage complex is excessively old or rare. Given the sympathetic and reversible nature of the plans that have been developed to alter this complex into a visitors’ center, there should be no reason to delay this conversion when funds are available. Architect Thomas Mansfield of DD&M has prepared floor plans of the complex as it presently stands. If a further record is deemed necessary, DHR should plan to document the interior appearance of the complex with black-and-white photography. It should be noted that plans for alteration of the complex do not call for significant changes to the chauffeur’s quarters, which are interesting and pleasant rooms that retain a high degree of integrity.