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REPORT ON THE STEPHEN ROWE BRADLEY HOUSE WALPOLE, NEW HAMPSHIRE

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This report is based on an inspection of the exterior and interior of the Stephen Rowe Bradley House on the afternoon on November 10, 2004. The purpose of the inspection was to determine which features of the house date from the time of its construction by Francis Gardner in 1808; which features may have been added to the building by Stephen Rowe Bradley between the time Bradley purchased the property in 1817 and his death in 1830; and which features postdate 1830.

Summary: The majority of the original building fabric of the Stephen Rowe Bradley House, dating from its construction in 1808, survives within the building. For the most part, what is seen today in the main house is the same material that would have been familiar to the first two owners of the property, Francis Gardner and David Stone, and to the third owner, Stephen Rowe Bradley. The house was remodeled around 1830. This remodeling altered or embellished the central stairhall and substituted stylish Greek Revival mantelpieces for the federal-style chimneypieces that would originally have surrounded the eight fireplaces of the house. Although the dwelling passed through many hands during the latter part of the nineteenth century, subsequent owners do not appear to have changed the house stylistically after the Greek Revival alterations mentioned above. Even the ambitious changes made to the property after 1901 by Fanny P. Mason had little real effect on the interior of the original house. The principal effect of Miss Mason's alterations on the original house was mainly to change the dimensions of the two eastern rooms on the first floor by extending their eastern walls, creating two rectangular bays that embrace and shelter the original eastern side door of the dwelling. Fanny Mason's changes were more substantial on the exterior of the original house. Her alterations included re-roofing the dwelling with slate, wrapping a classical veranda around the western and southern elevations of the old house, adding a new one-story kitchen wing south of the main house, and building a two-story servants' quarters beyond the kitchen.

The Preservation Company has taken extensive measurements of the house. These measurements will permit the drawing of floor plans that will augment this report by illustrating room sizes, fireplace and closet locations, and other characteristic features of this large and complex dwelling.

Original detailing: The Stephen Rowe Bradley House was reportedly built in 1808 on a one-acre lot by attorney Francis Gardner. Gardner eventually moved to Keene, where he was elected a member of Congress, but in 1813 he sold this property to David Stone. Stone proceeded to buy many parcels of adjacent land and to assemble a large farmstead around the house, possibly constructing the large barn that still stands (much remodeled) south of the dwelling.¹ Despite his expansion of the real estate holdings associated with the house, there is no clear evidence that Stone changed the architecture of the dwelling in any significant way.

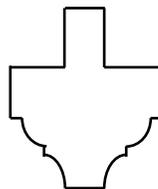
As built, and as it survives today for the most part, the Stephen Rowe Bradley House was a large and well-detailed federal style hip-roofed dwelling built over a full basement. The house has a “double house” floor plan, characterized by a broad central stairhall that runs through the house from front (north) to back, and by two large brick chimneys that heat the rooms on each side of the stairhall with a total of eight fireplaces.

The house is staunchly framed. Its projecting wall posts are visible in the corners of each room except the northwest rooms on the first and second floors, where walls are double-studded to provide shuttered window embrasures. The roof frame is characterized by two large, square, hewn kingposts. A short ridgepole, pentagonal in cross-section, spans the interval between the tops of the kingposts. Heavy, hewn hip rafters support the ends of smaller common rafters, which are mortised and pinned into the larger members. As is common in the Connecticut River valley, the roof frame of the Bradley House is composed of common rafters with no purlins, and the roof boards are applied horizontally across the common rafters. The attic is lighted by a single dormer window in the rear (south) slope of the roof.

The chimney stacks and the roof fabric of the house have been covered with whitewash to improve visibility in the attic. The bricks of the chimneys were laid in clay-sand mortar below the roof. Chimney bases and caps are constructed with lime-sand mortar.

Throughout its rooms on both floors, the Bradley House is characterized by joinery that fully exemplifies the federal style, and bears many similarities to details illustrated in Asher Benjamin’s architectural guidebooks, *The Country Builder’s Assistant* (1797) and *The American Builder’s Companion* (1806). Together with the staunch and enduring nature of the framing of the Bradley House, these details provide clear evidence that the Walpole-Westminster area supported experienced and sophisticated building craftsmen in the early 1800s.

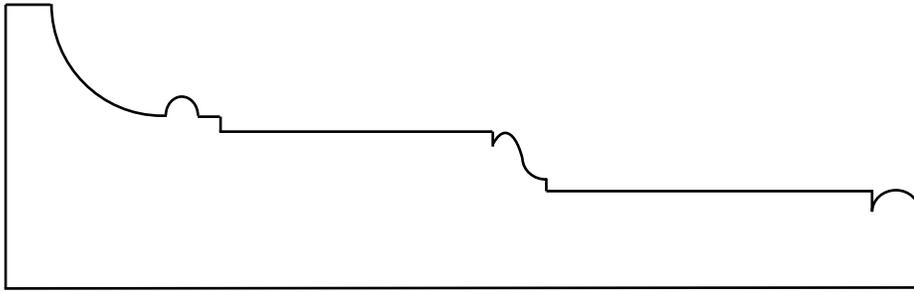
One notable aspect of the house is its retention, in most window openings of the main block, of the original window sashes. Both the upper and lower sashes measure about 33 inches by 33 inches and have large lights of glass measuring 10 by 14¾ inches. These sashes have an unusual muntin profile:



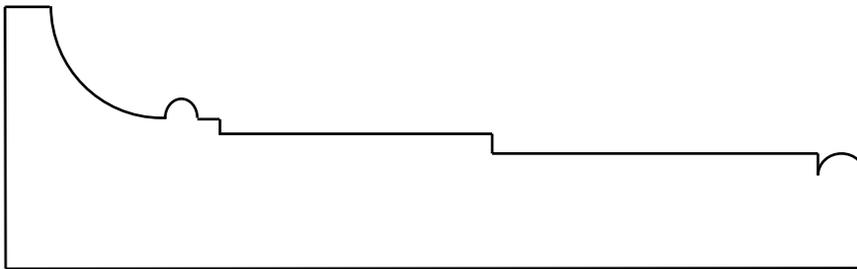
¹ Martha McDanolds Frizzell, *A History of Walpole, New Hampshire* (research by Anita Houghton Aldrich) (Walpole, N. H.: Walpole Historical Society, 1963), 2 vols., I:147-148

These windows remain largely in original condition except for the installation of spring balances. Their unusual profile may be reflected in other sashes of the early 1800s in the Walpole-Westminster area, but is otherwise unknown in New Hampshire buildings that have been surveyed thus far.

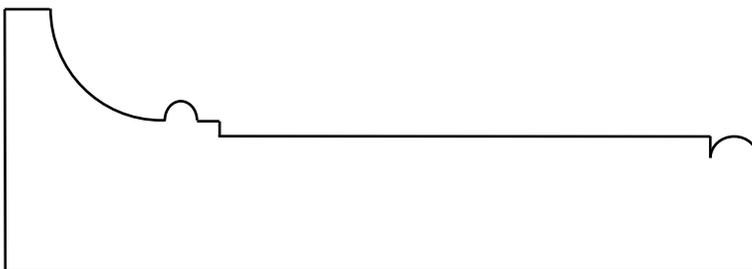
Original door and window casings throughout the house are typical of the early 1800s, and represent styles that might be seen in fine houses throughout New England at this period. Representative examples are shown below:



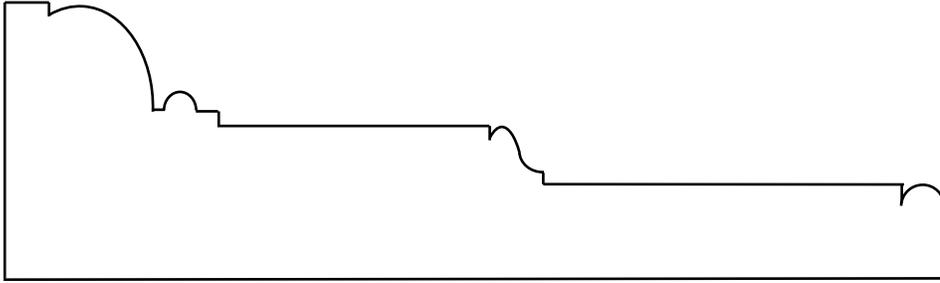
Northeast Chamber (not to scale)



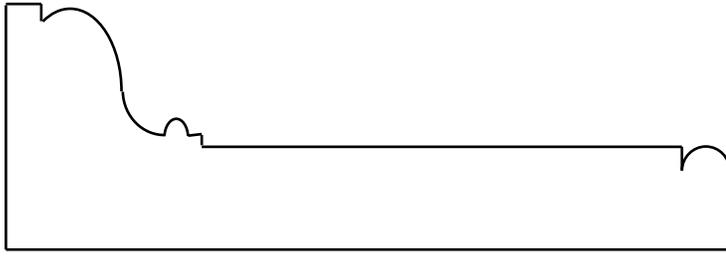
Lower Stairhall and Doors and Windows of Library [Southwest Room, First Floor] (not to scale)



Upper Stairhall Doors, and Palladian Window (not to scale)



West Parlor [Northwest Room, First Floor] and Northwest Chamber (not to scale)

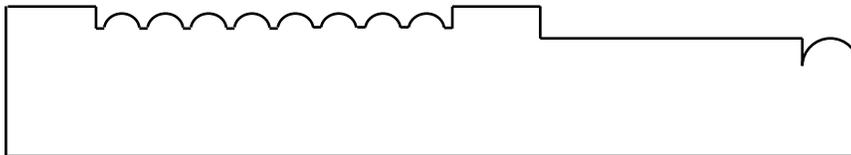


Dining Room [Southeast Room, First Floor] (not to scale)

As will be seen from the profiles above, the dining room is the only room among those listed that has a unique backband molding on its casings. Various other rooms in the house share backband moldings.

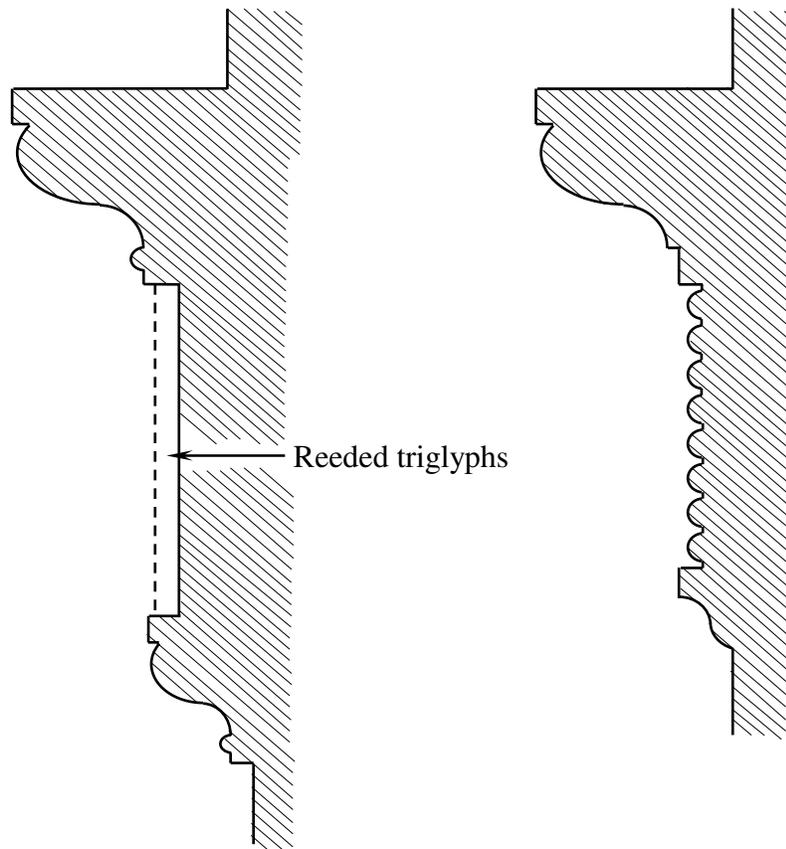
The two rear bedchambers of the house, on the south, both have flat door and window casings without backband moldings. The faces of these casings are set approximately flush with the surface of the wall plaster. As will be shown below, these two rooms also have doors of a less elaborate style than do rooms in the front of the house.

By contrast, the east parlor has reeded door casings that are unique in the house:



Door and Window Casings, East Parlor [Northeast Room, First Floor] (not to scale)

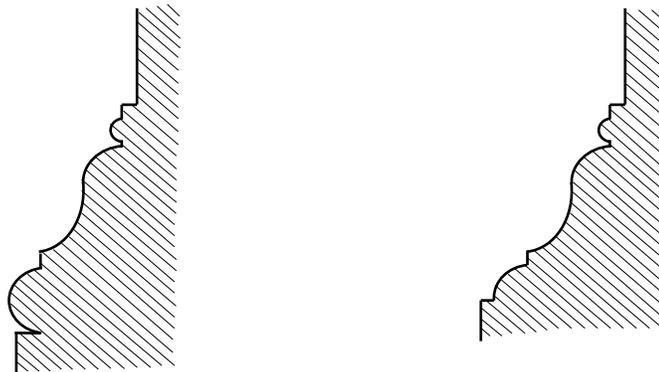
While the two northwest rooms on the first and second floors are the only rooms in the house that have double-studded walls and paneled window embrasures, the two northeast rooms have the most elaborate and decorative chair rails. The use of vertical or horizontal blocks of reeding on these chair rails impart a visual complexity to these rooms and convey a strong sense of the federal style:



*East Parlor [Northeast Room, First Floor]
(not to scale)*

*Northeast Bedchamber
(not to scale)*

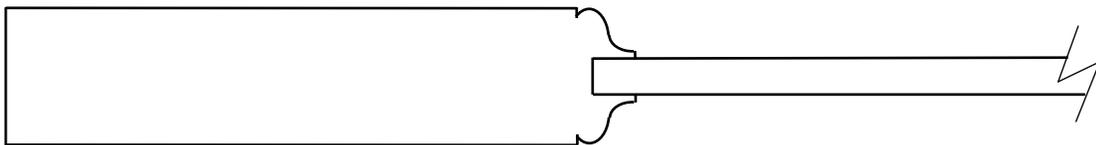
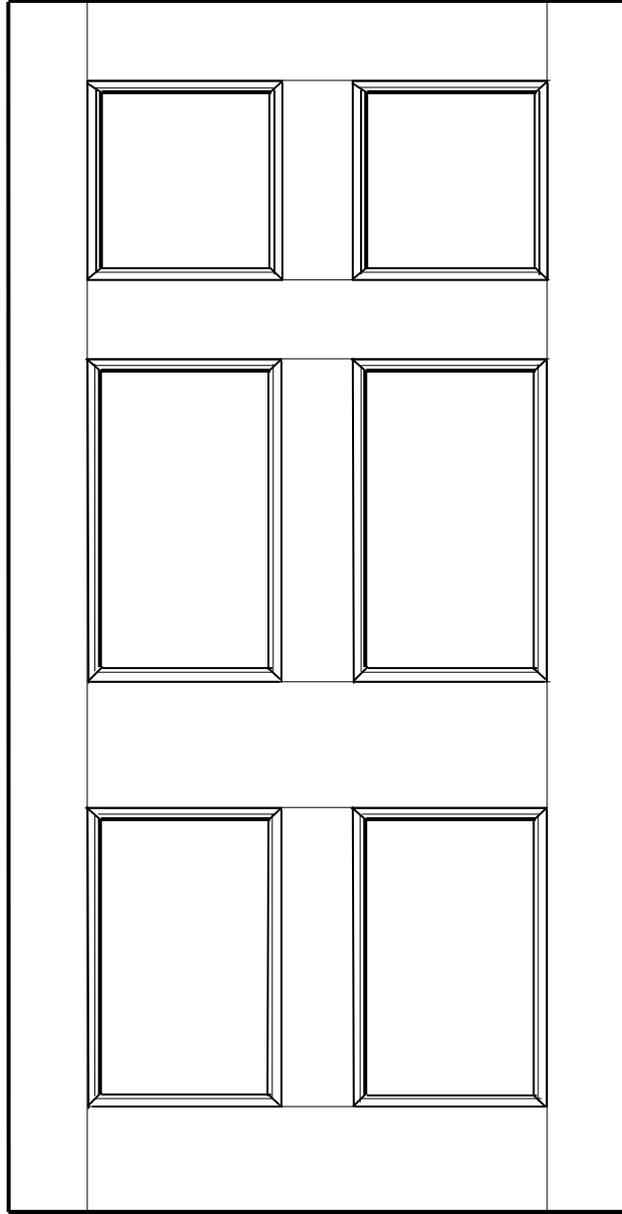
Throughout most of the house, baseboard profiles are likewise characteristic of the federal style. Two characteristic baseboard cap moldings are shown below:



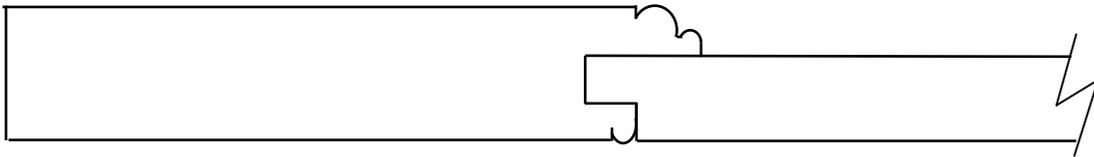
West Parlor [Northwest Room, First Floor] (not to scale)

Northwest Chamber (not to scale)

Throughout most of the house, interior doors (and folding window shutters in the northwest rooms on both floors) have this characteristic federal period panel arrangement and profile:



In the southeast and southwest bedchambers at the rear of the house, however, the detailing is simpler than elsewhere in the building. As mentioned above, the door and window casings in these two rooms are flat, with no backband moldings. Similarly, the doors in these chambers are of a heavier and more utilitarian federal style, usually reserved for secondary rooms or for houses of little pretension. These doors have four panels rather than the six found elsewhere in the house.

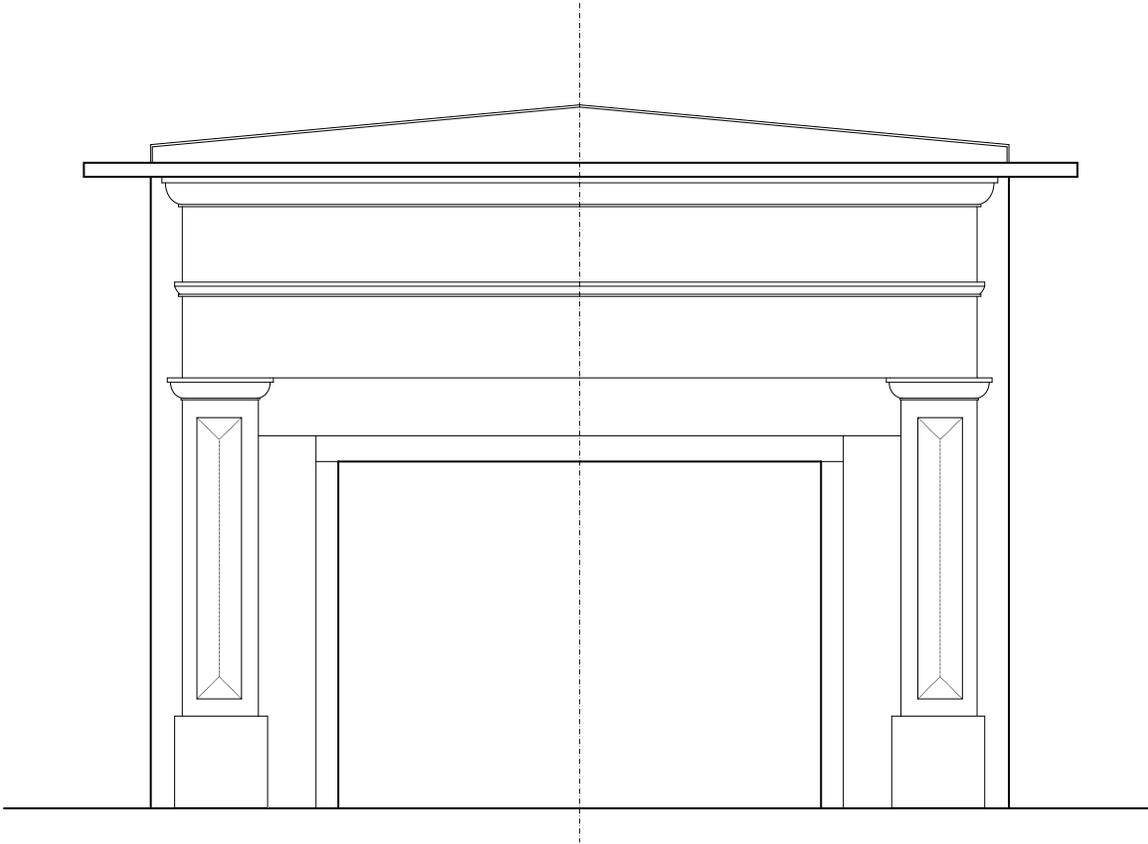


Profile of Doors in the Southeast and Southwest Bedchambers (not to scale)

Later detailing: Like all buildings, the Stephen Rowe Bradley House underwent change at various periods after its construction. Two principal periods of alteration or modernization can be discerned in the house. The first occurred around 1830, and may represent Bradley's own modernization of his dwelling in the spirit of the incoming Greek Revival style. Changes of this era were largely confined to the central stairhall and its front and rear entrances, and to the southwest room at the rear of the house, now used as a library or study.

The second series of changes occurred shortly after 1900, when Fanny P. Mason purchased the property, removed any kitchen wing that may have been attached to its rear wall, substituted a new kitchen wing, and attached a two-story servants' residence to the south end of the new kitchen extension. Although Fanny Mason's alterations were largely concentrated upon the modernization of the house through the provision of modern service facilities south of the historic structure, she enlarged the two eastern rooms on the first story. These enlargements were accomplished by moving the eastern walls of the two rooms easterly, beyond the historic foundations of the main house, while retaining their original window units. Side walls enclosed the newly created space, and craftsmen fashioned new interior detailing that closely matches the original joinery of 1808. The dining room extension was provided with two new side windows for added illumination; the parlor extension has no side windows. Together, the two extensions enclose the original eastern side door of the house, sheltering that entrance beneath a continuous roof that covers the entire addition.

The first remodeling of the house can be dated by its style to about 1830. This work was largely concentrated upon the central stairhall of the house and the front and rear entrance doorways at each end of the hallway. In addition, new mantelpieces in the Greek Revival style were placed throughout the house, all of them essentially of the same pattern, shown below, except for that in the present-day dining room (southeastern first-floor room).



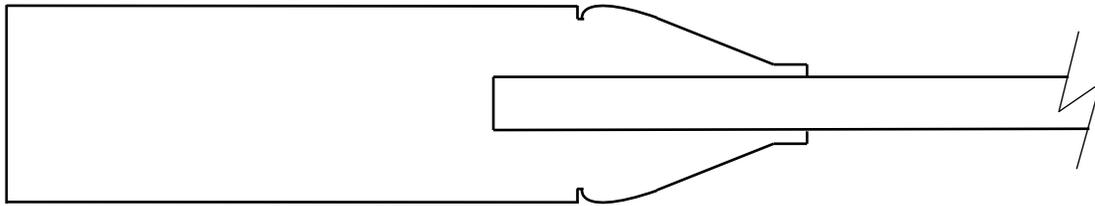
In addition to providing new mantelpieces throughout the house, the remodeling entailed the removal of the original front and rear entrances of the house and the substitution of the existing doorways. These two entrances are Grecian in feeling, with wide sidelights and broad transom sashes over the doors and the sidelights. The muntin profile that was chosen for the sidelights and transom differs from the original muntin pattern shown on page 2. It is a profile that was commonplace between 1830 and 1850, although it may have been used both before and after that date range:



Muntin Profile, Doorway Sidelights and Transom Sashes, and Long Windows in Library

Sashes of the same pattern were used in the elongated windows that were apparently installed in the southwestern first floor room, adapted as a study or library, during this remodeling. The same muntin profile appears in the sash in the attic dormer, although the carpentry of the dormer suggests that the feature is an original means of lighting the attic and this would have had an older original sash.

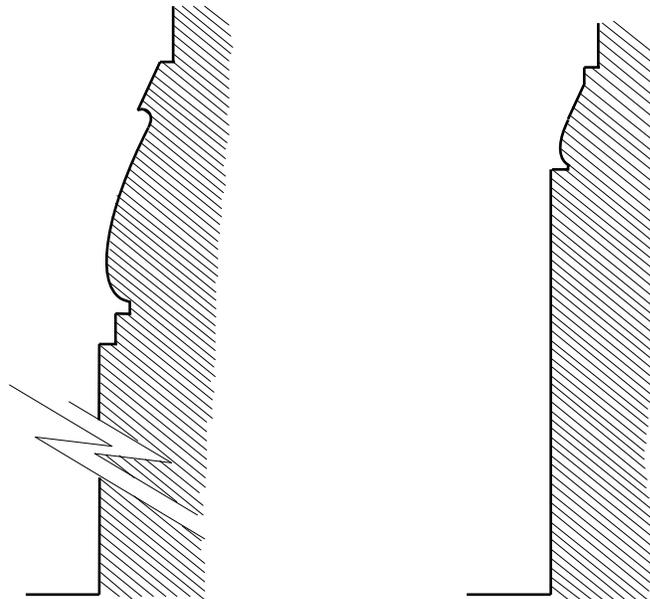
The front, rear, and eastern side doors of the house were replaced during this remodeling. The new (and surviving) doors were four-panel units rather than the six-panel doors that may be presumed to have been installed in 1808. They have wide, applied panel moldings in a characteristic Grecian ovolo profile:



The double doors on the western side of the house, now sealed because of the installation of a lavatory in the inside entry, are of a different profile from those shown above. Their profile suggests a date in the late nineteenth century.

The same remodeling apparently entailed the rebuilding of the stairway of the house, or at least the replacement of its balustrade. The current balustrade has a mahogany handrail that terminates in a horizontal volute, supported by a nest of balusters, at the base of the stairs. The balusters are round dowels rather than square rods. The fashion for dowel balusters began to prevail in urban centers in New Hampshire around 1830.

Although the remodeling did not affect original joinery in most parts of the house, baseboards in the new Grecian style were installed in the areas of major alteration: the stairhall and the southwestern room on the first story, where the long windows were installed. The new baseboard profiles are shown below:



Greek Revival-style Baseboard, Stairhall

Greek Revival-style Baseboard, Southwest Room

The question that surrounds these Greek Revival additions to the house is whether they could have been added by Stephen Rowe Bradley before his death in 1830, or whether they are likely to be the work of a later owner. In her *History of Walpole*, Martha McDanolds Frizzell states that in 1833 Bradley's various heirs sold the property to Henry S. Tudor, who in turn sold the estate in 1849 to retired Boston merchant Abiel Chandler.² Tudor, from Hartford, Connecticut, was Bradley's son-in-law, having married his daughter Mary Row Bradley in June 1828.³

Chandler was a philanthropist who endowed the Chandler Scientific School at Dartmouth College through a bequest at his death in 1851, and bequeathed the remainder of his estate, including this Walpole property, to the New Hampshire Asylum for the Insane.⁴ Given Chandler's short tenure as owner of the Walpole estate, it appears likely that the Greek Revival changes to the house were made either by Stephen Rowe Bradley before his death, or by subsequent owner Henry S. Tudor.

Greek Revival detailing was known and was being employed in rural New England before 1830, although it reached its period of universal acceptance in about that year. The influential Boston architectural writer Asher Benjamin did much to encourage widespread familiarity with the Grecian style when he published *The Practical House Carpenter* in 1830 and *Practice of Architecture* in 1833. Benjamin noted in the preface of the former that, "since my last publication, the Roman (federal) school of architecture has been entirely changed for the Grecian."

In illustration of Benjamin's assertion, St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Windsor, Vermont, designed and built between 1820 and 1822 from designs by Boston architect Alexander Parris, has joinery of a strongly Grecian character. The presence of this prominent building in the upper Connecticut River valley would not only have been influential in illustrating the character of the incoming architectural style, but would have encouraged craftsmen in the upper valley to acquire and use the molding planes and other tools that were needed to fashion the details of the new style.

In Walpole, local builder Aaron P. Howland (1801-67) designed and constructed many buildings in the Greek Revival style during the 1830s. Howland's well-documented interest in architectural design and construction, and his diligence as a builder, were influential in making Walpole an early center of the Greek Revival style.⁵

² Martha McDanolds Frizzell, *A History of Walpole, New Hampshire* (research by Anita Houghton Aldrich) (Walpole, N. H.: Walpole Historical Society, 1963), 2 vols., I:148.

³ *Ibid.*, II:286; George Aldrich, *Walpole As It Was and As It Is* (Claremont, N. H.: Claremont Manufacturing Co., 1880), p. 215; Abby Maria Hemenway, ed., *The Double History of Westminster, Vermont* (Chicago: Jameson & Moore, 1885), p. 36. An appendix to the probate inventory of Stephen Rowe Bradley records the transfer of the property to Henry B. Tudor: "To Henry B. Tudor, the Stone farm, so called, in Walpole, subject to the right of redemption thereof by David Stone, 40 acres . . . \$1000—. Received the foregoing legacy for my son H B Tudor, H S Tudor."

⁴ Joseph Burbeen Walker, "New Hampshire State Hospital (Asylum for Insane)," in James O. Lyford, ed., *History of Concord, New Hampshire* (Concord, N. H.: Rumford Press, 1903), 2 vols., II:945.

⁵ George Aldrich, *Walpole As It Was and As It Is* (Claremont, N. H.: Claremont Manufacturing Co., 1880), pp. 287-289.

Without further documentation, it is impossible to know whether the Greek Revival changes to the Bradley House were made under the direction of Bradley himself or of his son-in-law Tudor. In either case, these alterations do not diminish the essential integrity of the house as a federal-style dwelling. The key attributes of that dwelling, outlined above, are the same features that would have been familiar to Stephen Rowe Bradley during his ownership of the property.

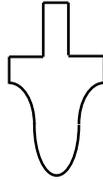
The alterations made by Fannie P. Mason immediately after her acquisition of the property in 1901 are documented somewhat in an article in the *Granite Monthly* magazine of March 1904. The article includes a photograph of the house with the extensions on the east, the verandah on the west, and the new kitchen and servants' wing already in place. The writer describes the house thus:

Conspicuous alike for beauty of design, treatment of detail and for situation is the fine old colonial residence on Westminster street, now the property of Miss Fanny P. Mason of Boston. The house stands on the crest of the hill gained by the highway leading from the railroad station to the center of Walpole village. It is in effect the stately and beautiful gateway to the village, in which abound truly magnificent homes of the true and original colonial type. The house in question commands a view of the Connecticut river valley that is miles in extent and upon which the eye never wearies in scanning. The estate is not the Walpole home of Miss Mason, for that is Boggy Meadow farm, with its some seven hundred acres of highly developed land, and located in the southerly part of town. This Westminster street property she bought some three years since, and in that time has restored its interior and exterior to their minutest lines, equipped it with modern conveniences and furnished practically every room with old colonial creations of rare merit and beauty. Every room has its open fireplace and the staircase halls are alike stately and full of attraction. . . . It is a matter of congratulation, not alone for Walpole but all New Hampshire, that this example of purest colonial architecture has become the possession of one who so happily appreciates its artistic worth and past associations as does Miss Mason.⁶

Most of Fannie Mason's changes to the Bradley House were additive rather than subtractive in nature, and thus preserved the older architectural features described above. Apart from the extension of the two eastern rooms on the first story, Fannie Mason restricted her interior alterations to the installation of bathrooms and lavatories in various former closets or passages that connected the front and rear rooms of the house beside the broad chimneys, and to the addition of electricity. On the exterior, she also added the broad verandah on the west and south sides of the old house.

As may be seen throughout the new kitchen and servants' quarters, and in the two new north and south side windows in the extension of the dining room, the window sashes installed in Fannie Mason's remodeling of the house employ the following muntin profile. Since sashes of this design do not appear in the main house (except in the sides of the dining room extension), it is clear that Miss Mason did not alter the surviving original windows of the main house.

⁶ G. A. Cheney, "The Gem of the Connecticut River Valley: Walpole," *The Granite Monthly* 36 (March 1904):157.



*Muntin Profile of Window Sashes of c. 1901,
employed in additions by Fannie P. Mason (not to scale)*

Suggestions for Further Research: An examination of the fabric of the Bradley House, as it stands today, reveals only one major ambiguity: the date of the Greek Revival alterations to the building. As noted above, these added features are seen mainly in the stairhall and the southwest room on the first floor (now used as a library or study), and in the mantelpieces that surround each fireplace in the house. In the current attempt to document the Bradley House as the property in New Hampshire or Vermont that is most closely associated with the life of Stephen Rowe Bradley, it is important to differentiate between those features of the house that Bradley knew, and those that later owners added after Bradley's death in 1830.

As noted above, the Greek Revival changes seen in the house could date from Bradley's later years and represent his deliberate modernization of the house. If so, these features would gain additional significance as Bradley's conscious alterations to a house that he had bought when the dwelling was some nine years old and was then coherently finished in an older style. If, on the other hand, these changes represent the work of Henry S. Tudor, Bradley's son-in-law, then they contribute nothing to an understanding of Bradley himself, although they add interest to the house as a document of the advent and strength of the Greek Revival style in Walpole.

Since this puzzle cannot be solved by physical examination of the changes, it would be worthwhile to carry out documentary research. Such research would most profitably concentrate on the Bradley documents that the current owner of the property, Bradley Willard, has donated to the University of Vermont, but could also include any other body of Bradley records that may exist elsewhere. Such research might disclose a financial record or written description of Bradley's own building activities, or of his possible connections with local craftsmen like Aaron P. Howland, mentioned above, or other joiners.

In establishing a level of significance for the Bradley House, it will be important to address both National Register Criterion B, which deals with the relationship between the property and an individual of national prominence, and Criterion C, which deals with the architectural significance and integrity of the house. Documentation of Criterion C will be aided by completion of the measured drawings that are being prepared for the property, and by the black-and-white photographs that are required as part of any National Register nomination. As an analysis of the original features of the house and of changes to those features, the current report is submitted as an aid to the development of a Criterion C argument for the significance and integrity of the Stephen Rowe Bradley House.